

LITTLE
HEROES
OF
FRANCE

KATHLEEN
BURKE



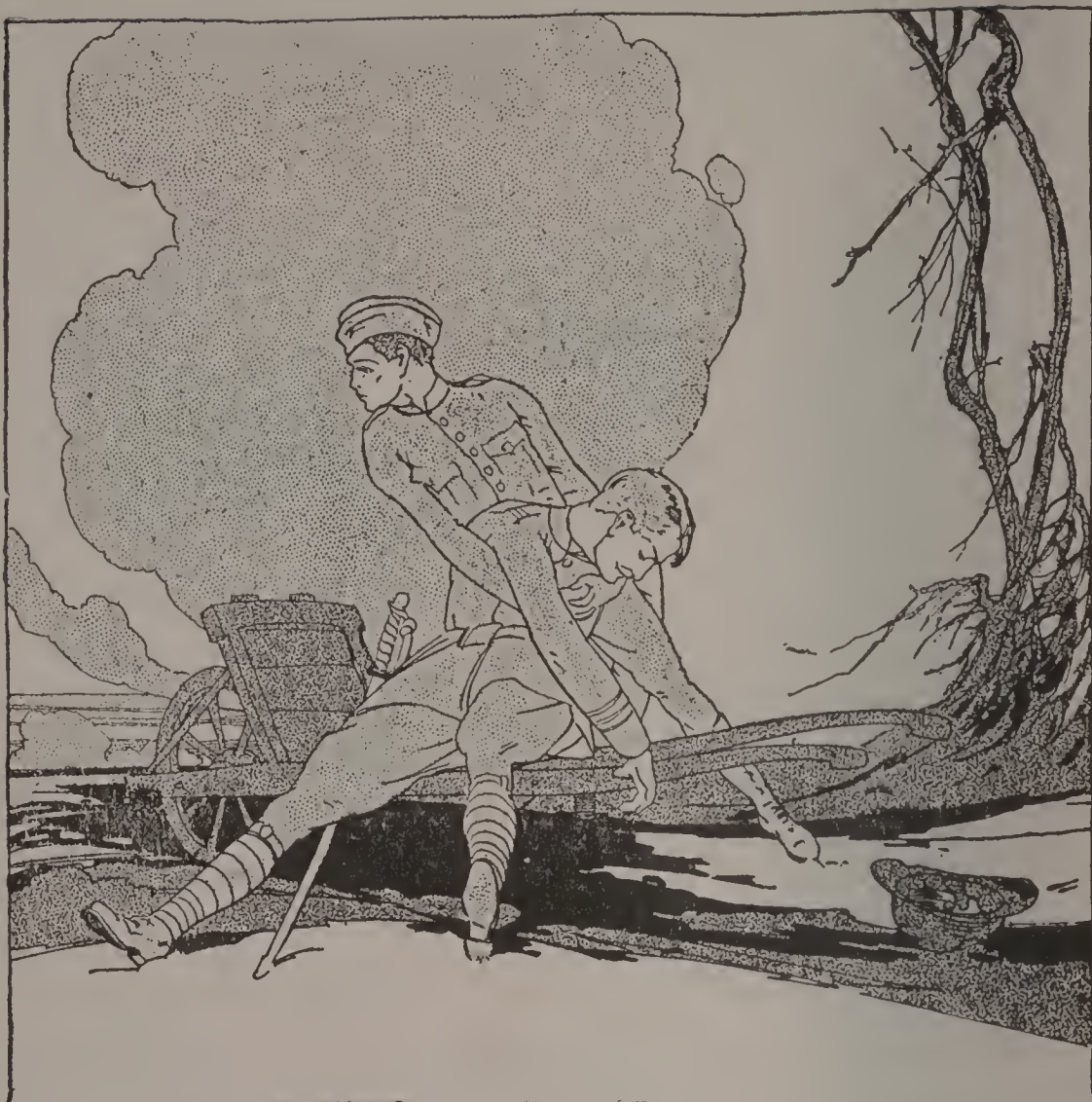
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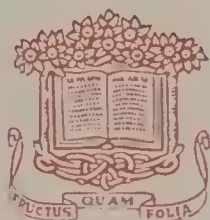
*LITTLE HEROES
OF FRANCE*



*"The Captain was unconscious but
André managed, bit by bit, to move
his body up onto the wheelbarrow"*

Little Heroes of France

By
Kathleen Burke, C.B.E.



*Illustrated
by
Paul Verrees*

*Garden City New York
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1920*

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J.P. 13 Oct. 1934

THIS BOOK
IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO
SIX DEAR AMERICAN CHILDREN

RICHARD S. CHILDS
CORNELIUS CRANE
WILLIAM DOHRMAN

SALLY GOODELL
FLORENCE CRANE
NANCY HORSLEY SCOTT

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INTRODUCTION

IT WILL, I am sure, interest readers of this book to know something of the personality of its author and of the circumstances that brought her into immediate touch with the war, both in its grim and dramatic phases.

Mrs. Peabody—Miss Kathleen Burke of the war period—is an English woman of Irish descent and in large measure French education. Her family record harks back to the Eleventh Century and to one “de Burgh” who came with William the Conqueror. In the course of the centuries the family has given to Britain and to the Empire many names and services of high distinction, that of the great Edmund Burke among them.

Within a week of the day when the German Army entered Belgium Miss Burke, under government appointment, was en route to Serbia as Secretary of a Relief Commission. On returning to England some months later

she was called upon to set forth conditions as they were found by relief workers in Serbia; and it was in this exposition that there was discovered, or developed, the gift of inspiring eloquence that later gave to Miss Burke a great and worthy vogue and that won vast endowments for humanitarian services associated with the war.

Enlisting in the cause of a Scottish Woman's Nursing Association, Miss Burke visited the various cities of Scotland and England, speaking to great audiences everywhere and winning for the nursing service unprecedented gifts of money. But her most effective work was done in America. For it, with the co-operation and aid of the British Government, she made special preparation by visiting the war fronts from the North Sea to Serbia and Italy. The fullest opportunities of observation were given her to the end that she might tell the story from first-hand knowledge.

As the war progressed Miss Burke made repeated journeys between America and the various scenes of conflict. In all she crossed the Atlantic Ocean eighteen times during the war, more than half of her crossings within the period of submarine warfare. She visited

in turn, and many times revisited, England, Belgium, France, Serbia, Italy, and elsewhere where war relief work was in progress. She was the only woman permitted to enter the Citadel of Verdun in the height of the great struggle and her hurried but charming little book, "The White Road to Verdun," remains the most graphic and spirited story of that most desperate of the many desperate battles of the war.

Again and again, after immediate and personal observation of war scenes, Miss Burke returned to America to make appeal for relief of suffering, mainly of women and children—most pitiable of the victims of the titanic fight. Her powers of oratory, reflecting personal knowledge and inspired by womanly sympathies, were truly amazing. Wherever she went—and she went everywhere—multitudes flocked to hear her. Not only did she stir all hearts but she unclasped all purses; and in the four years of her active work she won for the various humanitarian services of the war contributions aggregating more than six millions of dollars.

Many speakers enlisted in the same or similar causes, but none paralleled or approached

Miss Burke's achievements. In the great work which she undertook she became a veritable Jeanne d'Arc. In order to show their appreciation of her services, England, France, Serbia, Russia, and Greece conferred decorations upon her, and the 138th Field Artillery, A. E. F., made her Honorary Colonel of their regiment.

The stories of which this little book is made up came to Miss Burke in the course of her several war-front visits in France. Invention has contributed nothing to them—all are “really and truly.” Some of the children—Baby Pierre and Gustave, for example—Mrs. Peabody knew personally; others she knew because all France loved and honoured them. One of the stories, that of the Denisot children, was found in the diary of a German soldier. If in several of them there are incidents of a striking precocity it is to be credited to the fact that the boys and girls of France mature earlier than those of England or America and to the mental stimulation of times and events which made men and women of children before their time.

This little book bears witness to the fact that under her new conditions of life, Mrs.

Peabody has not lost the energies that gave a notable vitality and a distinguished service to the great cause for which the war was fought.

ALFRED HOLMAN.

*San Francisco,
July 6, 1920.*

*ANDRÉ LANGE AND HIS WHEEL-
BARROW*

Little Heroes of France

ANDRÉ LANGE AND HIS WHEEL- BARROW

LIKE all the other children of Alsace, André Lange, although born under German rule, was taught to love France and to think of it as his real country. When he was quite a baby, his grandmother would take him on her knee and tell him of the good old days when the tricolour flag of France flew over Alsace.

“Little André,” she would say, “you must always remember that you are really a Frenchman and not a German. Some day the French will come back to Alsace and the country will be glad again. I fear I am too old to see that happen—I shall be sleeping in the churchyard—but you must promise me that you will come and kneel on my grave and say, ‘Grandmother, the French are here.’ I

know that the good God in His mercy will let me hear your voice."

When the day's work was finished, the children would sit around the blazing log fire, eagerly listening to their grandfather, who never tired of recounting his adventures during the terrible war of 1870 when France was defeated and Alsace was forced under German dominance. He had been in Metz when General Bazain abandoned it to the enemy. He remembered that when Bazain was questioned as to his reasons for delivering the fortress into the hands of the Germans, he could only give as an excuse, "I did not see that I could do any good by holding out; my Emperor was a prisoner." And he had heard the famous reply of the French General who presided at the court martial:

"It is true your Emperor was a prisoner, but behind you stood France."

He would remind his little grandsons that, although they were at that time governed by Germany, "Behind them stood France," and that he hoped and prayed that France would regain Alsace and his grandchildren have the right to call themselves Frenchmen.

Naturally, the home influence made André

and his brothers rebellious against German rule. They were continually punished at school because, between the classes, they insisted on speaking French to each other. Time after time they returned crying when they had been severely beaten by the teacher. Even this, however, did not prevent them from thinking of the Germans as usurpers.

It was a joyous day for them all when the father had saved enough money to buy a small farm. They left Alsace, and settled in the eastern part of France. Their one regret was that their dear old grandparents had died a few months previously, for they knew how glad they would have been to live in France once more.

Although his brothers were studious, hard-working boys, André had always shown an adventurous spirit and a disposition to wander about the country. In spite of the punishment he received from his parents when he returned home after an absence of two or three days, nothing could prevent him from undertaking voyages of discovery whenever he was in the mood to set out on an expedition.

When the war started, in 1914, André

followed the first regiment that passed through the village. He was then fourteen years old, considered himself quite a man, and saw no reason why he should not be allowed to go forward with the soldiers. To his annoyance, when the officers discovered him, one of the men was deputed to go back with him to be sure that he reached his parents safely. The soldier, tired by the long day's march, did not hesitate to tell André what he thought of him, so that it was a very crestfallen, disillusioned boy who crept back into the house.

When another regiment arrived, André determined that he would try again to go with the army. This time, he took great precautions not to be found too soon. When all the family had gone to bed, he packed just a few clothes, a bottle of water, and a loaf of bread in his knapsack. When the regiment marched away at dawn, he followed behind the troops, managing to keep them in sight without being seen by them. It was only when they were three days' march from his own village that he joined the men, informed them that he had decided to be the mascot of the regiment, refusing, however, to give his name or to say where he lived.

The soldiers urged the boy to go back to his own people, but when they found that day after day the child was still with them, they finally adopted him. Many of them had left sons of their own at home and were secretly glad to have him around. In any event, the lad made himself useful. When the troops halted he was always the first to fetch water for the men to bathe their feet, and he was at all times ready to run errands, helping as best he could. He was never so proud as when they were on the march and one of the men who was feeling weary would allow him to carry his rifle or some other part of his heavy equipment.

The officers pretended not to know of his presence. They thought that as soon as they came near the battleline, within sound of the guns, André would leave them. Meantime, they ascertained that he did no harm and that he amused the regiment. At night, the soldiers stood him up on a table so that he might sing to them. He had a good voice, and it was not long before they discovered that he was also quite a skilful actor.

While the troops were resting one day, André entertained them by mimicking one of

their officers. The soldiers were laughing heartily at his antics, when, suddenly, he turned around to find that the officer he was impersonating was standing watching him. The boy was frightened, thinking the captain might be angry, but the soldier, smiling, placed his hand on the lad's shoulder, saying:

"That was quite well done, André. I only hope that I may so conduct myself on the field of battle that you will want to imitate me there as well."

From that day André attached himself specially to the young officer, and was never tired of singing his praises to the soldiers.

The men, to tease him, would sometimes criticise the captain. No matter how tall the soldier might be who dared to speak against him, André would roll up his sleeves and prepare to fight; but really, the troopers loved the captain almost as much as André himself, for he was not only an officer but a father to his men, anxious at all times for their welfare, never resting himself until he was sure that his soldiers had comfortable quarters and were well fed.

During the first engagement the men had no time to think about André. But when

there was a lull in the fighting, they were surprised to find the child going over the field of battle, carrying a large bucket into which he would dip a tin cup, giving water to wounded who were waiting to be carried to the dressing station.

From that day on there was no danger of André's being sent away from the regiment. The captain persuaded him to write to his parents to relieve their anxiety over his long absence, and soon after a letter came from his father giving his full consent for the boy to remain, but asking him to write oftener to him and his mother.

After the first day of battle André never asked to be allowed to carry a gun or to fight, for he saw that he could best serve his beloved regiment by looking after the wounded.

The boy seemed to bear a charmed life. He never avoided danger, and appeared to be absolutely without fear, but he was never hurt. Every night the young captain would send for him to sleep beside him and tell him what he had done during the day.

One morning, when the French were preparing for a surprise attack near Thiaucourt, André heard one of the officers express his

regret that they had so few men available, that in order to carry out the plan successfully no one could be specially delegated to look after the wounded. André turned to him and said:

“You go ahead and fight the Germans, I will undertake to bring the wounded back to a safe place.”

The soldiers smiled grimly.

“We know you are willing, but how do you propose to do it, André? It is impossible for a small boy to lift a helpless man and carry him.”

“I may not be six feet high and I may not weigh two hundred pounds, but I have grown fairly strong since I have been with you,” replied André. “Besides, I have a plan of my own—you will see.”

He went to a village behind the lines where he remembered there was a deserted farm. He knew quite well what he wanted and soon he was back in the lines with a wheelbarrow he had found.

“What on earth are you going to do with that?” inquired a sergeant.

“Don’t ask so many questions, chatty one. Wait and see,” answered André. “If I have not a large body, I have a big brain.”

The soldier patted him on the head. "You have a good heart, André, and that is best of all."

The battle was one of the fiercest in which André had taken part. For a short time his spirit failed him. He lay down in the trench, fearing that at any moment he might be struck by a fragment of shell. Little by little his courage returned, and, looking over the top of the trench, he saw to his horror that the young captain whom he loved so dearly was lying wounded out in "No Man's Land." When he saw that his friend was injured, he hesitated no longer. He fetched his wheelbarrow, threw it over the top of the trench, climbed out into the field, and gained the officer's side. The captain was unconscious but André managed, bit by bit, to move his body up into the wheelbarrow. Under a hail of bullets he trundled him safely to the first-line dressing station. All the way back he was sobbing, for he saw that the young officer was very badly wounded. When they reached the dressing station he longed to remain by his side to hear the doctor's verdict and to know if his friend would live. He realized, however, that he was needed out on the battlefield.

Twenty times André went out into "No Man's Land." Each time in his wheelbarrow he brought back a wounded man. He deliberately chose the worst cases, leaving the soldiers who were slightly injured to crawl back by themselves. Not only did he save the lives of the Frenchmen, but remembering that a wounded man is the child of all the world, he also brought in a German, who received the same care as the men of France.

He worked busily until he was struck in the leg by a bullet. Then one of the soldiers lifted the limp little body in his arms and carried it back to the dressing station from which, to his great joy, he was sent to the same hospital and placed in the next bed to his friend, the captain.

Before many weeks he was well enough to go back to his regiment. He remained with the men until the glorious day when the soldiers of France marched in triumph into Alsace.

After the entry of the French into Metz, Maréchal Petain asked to see the lad. He was found kneeling by his grandmother's grave whispering that the French were once more in Alsace.

And I think she heard him.

*MADELEINE AND ANDRÉ DANIAU—THE
CHILD BAKERS OF EXOUDUN*



“André went out into the yard, harnessed the horse to the wagon and, assisted by Madeleine, loaded the cart with the bread”

*MADELEINE AND ANDRÉ DANIAU—THE
CHILD BAKERS OF EXOUDUN*

MONSIEUR DANIAU lived at Exoudun (Department of Deux Sèvres) with his daughter, Madeleine, aged fifteen, and his son André, who was sixteen months younger than his sister. Their mother had died when they were quite small, so that from their earliest days the children had spent all their time with their father.

Monsieur Daniau was a hard-working man who had inherited his bakery from his father. Since he was eager and willing to oblige his clients at all times, he was very popular and much respected. He served not only the inhabitants of his own village, but also made daily deliveries in the surrounding district.

He was intensely proud of his little ones and was glad that they seemed to have his inherent love for work. At school, they applied themselves steadily; and when they were out of class, they often sat on the large

sacks of flour in their father's bakery, watching him prepare the bread for the oven. During the holidays they liked to be allowed to take an active interest in his work. Each morning they were up before daybreak to watch him bake, and by turns they drove the cart in which the nice, crisp loaves were delivered. In this way they learned not only to be quite skilful bakers, but also to know where their father's customers lived and the quickest way to reach them.

"Some day," he told them, "I shall take a long holiday, and leave you children to carry on the business."

The father put his arms around their shoulders, drawing them both to him. Only that day he had heard the neighbours talking of the possibility of war, and while he was really joking when he threatened to leave them, he had a secret fear that soon he might be forced to go away.

Within three days the blow fell. When André was on his way to school he noticed a large crowd assembled around a poster that had just been pasted up on the walls of the Mayor's house in the village square. It was the order issued by the French Government for the

immediate mobilization of all able-bodied men capable of joining the French Army. Some of the men were reading the poster with a look of grim determination on their faces; others were examining their pockets to find the small slip of paper, carried by every Frenchman, telling him just where he should report for military service and where his uniform and rifle would be waiting for him in the event of his country's being in danger from the attack of an enemy. André could only get near enough to read the last words in large type, "LONG LIVE FRANCE," but he gathered the meaning of the poster from one of the women, who, silently weeping, was standing behind the men.

"The Germans are in Belgium and they have boasted that in three weeks they will be in Paris," she told him. "All our men must go to war, my husband, Marie's brother, everyone we love."

"Will father be obliged to go, too?" asked André.

"I do not think he will be forced to join the army. He can remain, if he wishes, because he is needed to help feed those of us who must stay behind the lines," answered the woman.

Back to his home ran André.

“Father! father!” he called. “The Germans are attacking us and the men must all go into service at once. Madame Dubonnet says that you are not obliged to join the army because you are needed to help feed the people behind the lines. Oh, I’m so glad you can stay with us!”

For one minute M. Daniau hesitated—then he turned to his son and asked:

“What were the last words on the poster?”

“Long Live France,” replied André.

“If all of us who had the right, or thought we had the right, to save our skins by staying home, were just to remain in safety, how long do you think France would live, little son? You and your sister must be brave. France defends us and watches over us in times of peace; we must help her when she is in danger.”

By this time, Madeleine had heard the news and had joined them. Her father took her in his arms, saying:

“I would ask someone in the village to care for you, but I think you two children can look after each other. You must now be not only a sister but also a mother and a father to your young brother.”

Turning to André, he added:

"I know you will obey your sister and defend her against all harm, until, please God, I come back to you."

"I'll do my best," replied Madeleine. "If I am ever in trouble, I will consult with some of the other women." André said, "You need not worry about me a moment, father, and I'll take care of Madeleine."

Both the children helped their father to gather the few things that he needed to take with him. With heavy hearts, scarcely realizing what was taking place, they walked with him until he joined the other men who were leaving the village. They watched him marching with his friends down the long, straight road until he was out of sight. Then they returned to their home. For more than an hour they sat huddled together, stunned by their misery. Madeleine was the first to arouse herself to action. After all, André must be fed, and she would be a bad "little mother" if she did not look after him. When she had laid the table, she went out into the bakery to fetch a loaf for themselves and saw lying there all the bread that her father had baked that morning and had not had time to

deliver. The thought flashed across her mind that André was not the only one who would be hungry and that they had no right to think only of themselves.

“André!” she called. . “Come here at once, I have an idea! Father would not want us to remain idle, just weeping for him. Only a few days ago he told us as a joke that we could carry on the business. Let’s try to do it. It hurts me to think of the fire going out and all the good flour being wasted.”

“I don’t see why we shouldn’t try,” replied André. “I know perfectly well how to knead the dough and prepare the furnace.”

“And I will help you, brother. You know they tell us at school that a little good will goes a long way. We will do our best. If we fail no one will blame us and if we succeed it will help to make the days pass quickly until father returns. What is more, we can be really useful. All the women will be busy looking after the farms now that the men are gone and we can relieve them of extra work by baking bread.”

André went at once to his teacher, explained to her what they proposed to do, and asked for permission to absent himself from school.

The teacher, realizing the shortage of labour which would be the inevitable result of the men being called for military service, and knowing that Daniau ran the only bakery serving Exoudun and the other villages, not only gave André the necessary permission, but also told him that if he and his sister could carry on the bakery, they would be rendering a true service to their country.

“I have only one suggestion to make, André,” she said. “Now that the women no longer have their men to earn money for them, there will be a great deal of poverty. If, during these hard times, you could supply the bread at cost price, not trying to make any profit beyond the amount required for your own and your sister’s maintenance, you would be wonderful patriots.”

André repeated to Madeleine what the teacher had suggested and she enthusiastically agreed with the idea. She knew well that her father was one of the kindest hearted men and that if he were there he would have done all in his power to relieve any suffering he might see around him. So, without any idea of personal gain, in a perfect spirit of patriotic service, they started on their business venture.

André went out into the yard, harnessed the horse to the wagon and, assisted by Madeleine, loaded the cart with the bread that his father had baked before leaving. As Madeleine delivered the loaves to their customers, she told them all what they planned to do. A great many of the women promised to come for the bread themselves so as to lighten their task, while in each of the surrounding villages Madeleine arranged to leave a certain number of loaves in one house, to be called for by those who needed them.

"You are fine children," the villagers said. "We pray that the good God will help you in order that you may be able to 'carry on' successfully."

"Don't praise us yet," answered Madeleine. "We may fail. It is easy to bring you the loaves father made; it remains to be seen if we can make them ourselves."

When she returned home she found André already at work on the dough for the next baking. He was anxious to write at once to their father to tell him what they were doing, but Madeleine persuaded him to wait until they had worked for at least a week and were sure they could bake the bread satisfactorily.

They both went early to bed, and got up at four in the morning to commence their first real attempt to bake. Madeleine put the dough into the tins while André prepared the furnace.

“Is the oven hot?”

“Yes, sister.”

“Very well, in goes the bread.”

Hand in hand they sat, anxiously waiting until it should be baked. Would it be all right, would it be half-baked, would it be burned, would it be successful?

When the time came, they opened the oven door and to their great delight, when they drew out the first tray of loaves, found that they had not failed. They took one loaf of golden-brown bread after another out of the oven, and placed them in long lines to cool.

“It is not as good as father makes it,” said Madeleine, as she broke a piece off and tasted it, “but I think it does very well for a first trial, André.”

All the villagers were loud in their praises, and vowed that they had never eaten such good bread. They were delighted with the children’s courageous endeavour to do their bit. Some of them predicted that they would

tire of their self-imposed task; others thought they would not be strong enough to keep up the heavy work for any length of time. Many of the women offered to assist, but the children refused all help. During the dark days of the German advance in 1914, the two young Daniaus fed, not only their own customers, but also many hundreds of refugees who passed through the village flying before the invaders. Day after day there were long lines of people waiting outside the bakery for the bread to be taken from the oven. The local authorities supplied the children with extra flour, and until the victory of the Marne, when the Germans were forced to retreat, the children worked practically night and day.

Those who had said that the youngsters would be obliged to give up were forced to admit that they seemed to have almost more than human strength. The weeks passed into months and soon it was more than a year since Madeleine and André had started to run the business. Up every morning at four o'clock, to bed every afternoon at five, their life was indeed a hard one.

At the end of the year their father came home on leave. During the days he was with

them he did the baking himself, but when the time came for him to return to the trenches he left them with his mind free of all anxiety on their account. He realized that they were true heroes. He knew only too well that in moments of excitement men and women are capable of great acts of self-denial and sacrifice, but he saw that his children were giving an example of the finest courage in the world—the carrying on continuously of a dull, everyday task. They continued to work until after the signing of the armistice, when their father was released from his military duties and could take over the bakery himself.

The French Government, desiring to reward the initiative, courage, and devotion to duty which the children had shown, offered them both free education in any university they might choose, so that they could have an opportunity to make up the time they had lost while serving their neighbours and their country.

DENISE CARTIER



*"The child was suffering agony . . . 'Please ask
someone to break the news to mother' "*

DENISE CARTIER

DENISE felt that it was good to be alive, to run down the long alleys of the Bois de Boulogne chasing her hoop, to watch the ducks on the lake, to collect the pretty coloured leaves just commencing to fall from the trees, and, above all, to run home to her mother who was waiting to welcome her. It was true that her mother could not give her as many presents as some of her little friends received, but Denise knew there was nothing that her mother would not try to do for her and that she loved her tenderly. Often the other children would try to persuade her to stay to play a little longer with them in the park but she always refused and went home when she was expected, for she knew that that was the best way to show her mother how much she really cared for her.

It was not always easy to part from her companions. The changed conditions under which they were living since the German

invasion of France had taught them so many new games. All their old sports seemed dull and uninteresting. When they were alone they still rolled their hoops and played with their tops and balls, but as soon as a group could get together they adopted more war-like pastimes. All the boys thought they were budding soldiers, and strange but true, for in the usual way French children do not mingle much, they allowed the girls to play with them. After all, even an army must have hospitals and Red Cross nurses. Denise and her chums had all persuaded their mothers to give them white aprons and had made white caps for themselves with the Red Cross embroidered on the front. Day after day the boys fought mock battles and took turns to rank as wounded, being looked after, bandaged with any old pieces of rag they could find, and petted by the little maidens.

In fact, the girls had no use for the boys who were not trying to be warriors. Young Emile Machet thought their games far too rough. The first time he had joined with the other boys in a sham fight he had received a hard crack on the head from a wooden sword and this entirely killed his military ardour.

He therefore decided to avoid taking any part in their games in the future. One day he tried to inveigle Denise into leaving the others to play with him.

The young lady looked him up and down rather scornfully and said, "I am sorry, but I am on duty with the ambulance as a nurse."

"If your cousin Albert asked you to go with him," replied Emile, "I'll bet you'd do it."

"Maybe so, but you must remember Albert is a Boy Scout," answered Denise with her nose in the air as she turned and walked away from Emile.

The boy decided after this that it would be better to take any knocks that might be coming to him and play with the others like a man, rather than be despised.

After school that day he found Albert and asked, "Would they allow me to be a Boy Scout?"

"Certainly. Why not?" replied Albert. "Only you must be prepared to work hard."

"All right, I'm ready," answered Emile.

Albert introduced him to the leader of his own patrol and within a few weeks Emile was a full-fledged Scout, doing excellent work as a cyclist messenger attached to one of the

largest Paris hospitals. He often went in his uniform to see little Denise and they became the best of friends.

In the early days of September, 1914, Denise watched the preparations being made to defend Paris against a long siege, for the enemy was advancing rapidly and the city might be surrounded at any time. Large sections of the Bois de Boulogne were cut off from the public, while hundreds and hundreds of oxen and sheep were driven into the enclosures so that there would be a reserve of fresh meat for the inhabitants if the enemy should manage to close in on the city and cut off supplies from the outside world. Not only meat, but also huge quantities of canned milk and grain were stored away. The French authorities did not intend to surrender Paris but wanted to be able to stand a long siege if it became necessary.

The animals soon became quite tame and allowed the children to pass among them while they continued quietly grazing. Denise loved above all to play with the sheep, because in her heart of hearts she was a little afraid of the cows.

Notwithstanding the fact that all possible

precautions were taken to save them from starvation, many of the families, especially those with numbers of young children, thought it more prudent to go south. The streets were crowded with a never-ending stream of cars laden with people and baggage deserting the city to seek safety far from the sound of the guns, while whole families literally camped out at the railroad terminals waiting, sometimes two or three days, before they could get space on the outgoing trains. They travelled crammed in the corridors, hanging on to the steps of the carriages, some of them even climbing on to the roofs of the compartments, lying down flat as they passed through the tunnels.

Denise was quite old enough to appreciate the danger that threatened Paris when the advance of the Germans was unchecked. She knew that the enemy was approaching daily nearer and nearer to the city, that it was feared that the French Army could not hold them back, and that the people were flying because they dreaded to fall into the hands of the invaders.

“Shall we go, too?” she asked her mother.

“I do not think so, child. It costs a great

deal of money to leave Paris, and besides I do not intend to allow any German to turn me out of my little home."

"I think you are quite right, mother," answered Denise. "I'm not at all afraid. I am sure the soldiers will not hurt us even if they do capture Paris."

Denise was quite proud of her mother and was glad to be able to say to the other children, "My mother is afraid of nothing. We are going to stay here and see what happens. Mother says she believes the French Army will never let the Germans reach us."

The Parisians who remained behind became accustomed to the daily visits of the enemy air-planes which hovered above them bombing the city. The great sirens blew to warn the inhabitants whenever a Taube was sighted and they were ordered to take cover at once, and remain in the cellars of their houses. Unfortunately, they did not always obey the authorities. Nothing in the world could prevent them from running out into the streets to watch the planes overhead and to see their own aviators go up to give battle to the enemy. Even at night they could see the small red tail-lights passing to and fro in the

sky, and knew that the French planes were watching like guardian angels.

Madame Cartier had told Denise always to go to a place of safety if she happened to be away from home when the warning was sounded, but as she did not obey the rule any too well herself, it was not surprising that Denise should go out with the other children to watch the raiders passing overhead.

The German idea was that they could scare the French into submission and that if they could get the civilians properly frightened behind the lines they would bring pressure to bear on the authorities to end the war. It would have suited the Germans very well to have the war stop while they were still riding on the crest of a wave of victory. They failed absolutely. The air raids only served to increase the patriotism of the French people and goaded them on to new sacrifices in order to stand behind their army.

Denise came home one day and told her mother that she had been standing with a group of little friends watching a German airman, while he circled round and round without doing anything. At last one of the small boys, his nose in the air, his hands in his

pockets, launched the remark, "For goodness sake, hurry up, old man. If you are going to drop a bomb, drop it. I want to go home and have my dinner."

Madame Cartier wanted to laugh, but she told Denise that she should have come straight to their cellar when there was so much danger for her out in the streets. She would probably have punished her and sent her to bed, but just at that moment a neighbour rushed in, waving a small flag and shouting, "Good news! Thank God, we are saved! Joffre has defeated the Germans, and their army is in full retreat."

The great battle of the Marne had been fought and won, the city of Paris saved! It was no wonder that all the Parisians gave themselves up to rejoicing and that in the general happiness Madame Cartier quite forgot to be cross with Denise.

The Germans, angered by their defeat, continued to try to destroy Paris. On the 27th of September, 1914, Denise was returning from school when one of the German airplanes started to bomb the city. The airman evidently intended to hit one of the government buildings, but the bomb dropped at the

corner of the Avenue du Trocadero and the Rue Freycinet. A passing taxi was blown to bits, and a large fragment of the bomb struck little Denise. From everywhere people rushed to her help, regardless of their own peril. The child was suffering agony, but looking up into the face of a woman who was holding her in her arms, she said, "My leg is injured and I am in great pain. Please ask someone to break the news to mother, but do not let them tell her how seriously I am hurt." Then she became unconscious.

She was taken at once to the Beaujon Hospital, where the doctors, finding that she was badly hurt, were obliged to amputate her leg to save her life.

Her youth and strength saved her. Although the hospital staff had learned that the child was brave they shrank from telling her that she had lost her leg, and it was her mother who was deputed to acquaint her with the sad fact.

"You know how much I love you, Denise—you are the dearest girl in the world to me," she began. "Now I shall care for you even more because you will be obliged to rely more on me. Be brave, little one. The doctors

have asked me to tell to you that they were obliged to cut off your leg—otherwise you might have died.”

“I shall not be able to run any more, or play with the other children. Oh! Mother, mother!” sobbed the child.

Her mother bent her head and kissed her. There was nothing she could say. Denise cried for a few minutes, but it was not long before she turned a smiling face to her mother, saying:

“There is no reason for me to show the white feather. Do you remember the story Cousin Henry told us of the soldier who replied when the doctor told him he must lose his arm: ‘I went into war prepared to give my life for France and she is only taking one of my arms.’ Well, mother, I can feel now that I, too, am a soldier and I can say that I have given my leg to France. And you will love me a little more because there is just a little less of me to love.”

During the period of her convalescence Denise spent her time knitting socks for the soldiers and writing to them. As soon as she was well enough, all her young companions were allowed to visit her. Emile Machet

came two or three times a week, whenever he was free. Sitting by her bedside, he would talk of the work he was doing.

“You made me feel that boys ought to try to do something,” he said. “I persuaded twenty other lads to join me after your cousin Albert had arranged for me to be a Boy Scout, so, really, you have a troop of twenty Scouts all your own. Nearly all the boys in my troop have been, and still are, in the forts around the capital where they are employed as orderlies of the officers and share the soldiers’ mess. They get plenty to eat, and it is a great relief to our mothers because it is hard to feed us on the ten cents a day allowance they get from the government. You know how much we like to eat.”

“I can understand why your mothers are glad to be rid of you at mealtimes,” laughed Denise. “You get your clothes, too, don’t you?”

“Yes. If we give satisfaction, at the end of a month the regimental tailor is allowed to make clothes for us, and that also helps make ends meet. Of course, I do not mind admitting that most of us think it dull to be on duty here instead of up nearer to the front.

“One of my friends, who lives in a village not far from the Belgian border, came down to visit us the other day with his grandfather. He told me that one of the favourite pursuits of the boys around where he lived was ‘to go to see the English,’ meaning the British troops who were near by. The British soldiers were always glad to see them and would call out to them, ‘Hallo, Baden Powell Scouts!’ They would try in their bad French to make the boys understand that they had sons of their own who were Boy Scouts and were serving England by guarding her coasts, patrolling the railway lines, and helping with the harvest.”

“The Scouts are helping here with the harvest, are they not?” asked Denise.

“Why, yes. When you are strong enough to go to the country you will see them everywhere aiding the women on farms and gathering the crops. It is hard work, but not dangerous. My friend, André Germis, nearly lost his life up there on the Belgian front. He went with a companion on his bicycle to see the English. They met a patrol of German cavalry whom they at first mistook for British because their helmets were covered with khaki. The Germans arrested them and

questioned them but the boys pretended to be stupid so that they received no information from them. The soldiers confiscated their bicycles, but allowed them to wander about. The boys walked carelessly around a corner and then took to their heels until they reached the French outposts. There they reported to the captain in charge, who immediately sent them in a motor to Headquarters where they had the proud distinction of being the first to give information of the advance of the enemy."

"They must have been awfully glad," said Denise.

"I envy them the excitement of such an adventure," replied Emile. "Life here seems very dull by comparison."

"You must not say that, nor even think it," answered Denise. "Someone must stay behind the lines, and I think, Emile, that you and the other boys of your troop are splendid. Please bring them all to see me, so that I can tell them how fine I think they are."

Emile left her much encouraged and did not fail to repeat what she had said to his companions.

Denise's courage and cheerful endurance won for her the sympathy of all Paris. A

public subscription was opened to raise funds for her education and to help her in her future life. When an official of the French Government came to present the money to her in the hospital he said.

“Denise, we all look on you as a splendid example of a brave little girl. The present we are making you is quite out of proportion to the affection we all feel for you. We are very proud of you.”

Denise answered simply: “Why, any other French child would have been just as brave.”

Her work for the soldiers kept her very busy. She was never seen to cry when her mother was near her, but sometimes in the night, when the nurse was making her rounds, she found Denise’s pillow wet with tears, but the little girl boasted, “Mother never sees me weep. You can understand I must be brave so as to cheer her up. It is really rather funny. In the old days I went to her always with my tales of woe, now it is my turn to be ‘grown up’ and comfort her.”

When Denise was well again, her mother arranged to take her to the country. She feared the first days they would spend together because she knew the child would rebel

against her changed condition. Denise continued, however, to work, and showed no signs of grieving. As her mother watched her adding stitch after stitch to a nice warm scarf she was making for one of the men, she said to her, "It is a great consolation to me that you do not complain; it would break my heart, dearest little one, if I saw you too unhappy."

"It is true I have to sit still," answered Denise, "but really I think you ought to be glad. You used to say I was more like a boy than a girl and you were always worried for fear I would topple down out of a tree and break my neck. Now you know I can't get into mischief, so smile and be cheerful, mother. I'm a good deal more likely to grow up to be a useful woman."

*ROBERT FELIX—THE SCHOOLBOY
OF RHEIMS*



*“We are just like real soldiers
now that we have gas masks”*

*ROBERT FELIX—THE SCHOOLBOY
OF RHEIMS*

ALTHOUGH in 1915 the city of Rheims was under constant bombardment from the German guns, the civilians, with characteristic French courage, refused to leave their homes. Madame Felix lived in the southern part of the city with her son, Robert. In spite of the danger from the falling shells, she had the greatest difficulty in keeping him in the house. Like all normal boys, he loved to run and to play with his comrades. When his mother told him that he was likely to be wounded, or even killed, if he insisted in remaining out in the streets, he would reply:

“What am I to do? I have read all the books in our house, most of my toys are broken, and we have no money to buy new ones now, even if they could be found in the shops. Really, mother, you must admit it is not much fun to be shut up all day.”

“I know it is hard for you to obey me, son,” answered his mother, “but you must

remember that while your father is at the war I look to you to protect me. What would I do if my boy were killed?"

"I am very glad you rely on me, mother," said Robert. "I will try to stay under cover as much as possible."

His mother patted him on the cheek, smiling at him tenderly. She knew he would endeavour to keep his promise yet no one realized better than she that time hung heavily on his hands, and that it is not easy to keep an active boy in one place without some kind of definite occupation.

Some days later, while they were preparing their evening meal down in the cellar, there was a loud knocking at the door.

"I will go up and find out who is there," said Robert.

"Thank you, son," replied his mother, "but do not, on any account, go out into the street. I can still hear the shells falling on the other side of the town and they may fire on us here at any minute."

When Robert opened the door, he found a young lady, waiting whom he recognized at once as one of the teachers in the school he attended before the war.

"May I see your mother?" she asked.

"Of course. Please come down into the cellar. You know, we live down there. I just hate it," he added.

Madame Felix looked scared; she was always afraid news might come that her husband was either wounded or dead. She came forward, however, to welcome the young woman, while Robert fetched her a chair.

"Please do not be frightened, Madame," said the newcomer. "I am not here to bring you bad news of any kind, but to ask your coöperation in an idea we wish to put into effect. I was a teacher in one of the schools before they were destroyed by the shells or closed on account of the danger to the children. Some of the other teachers and I, feeling that the parents must have great trouble in keeping the children indoors without anything to do, have decided to open a school, under the direction of M. Thenault, in the underground cellars of one of the large champagne factories. You know that most of the factories have three or four stories of subterranean cellars. The roofs of these cellars are made of reinforced cement. We think, therefore, if we hold our classes three stories below ground,

with the two other cellars above to protect us, the children will be in comparative safety."

"I know those cellars quite well," replied Madame Felix. "My husband was employed in a champagne factory before he went to war, so that I have often been with him to see them. If you can arrange the school there, we mothers will never know how to thank you enough. It will keep the children amused, prevent them from falling behind in their studies, and, at the same time, keep them out of danger."

Robert had been sitting on a barrel swinging his legs, listening intently to the conversation.

"Mother, mother, you will let me go, won't you?" he cried.

"Yes, indeed," answered Madame Felix. Turning to the young woman she added, "Please let me know when you are ready. I shall be very glad for Robert to be one of the first pupils in your underground school."

"Certainly. I will inform you at once when the school is opened. There is only one formality to be carried out. Naturally, we shall do our best to protect the children, but, in these days, no one can foresee what may happen or what new and terrible weapon the enemy may employ against us. If you will

sign this paper saying that you hold us free of all responsibility, I will enter your son's name on the school list at once."

"Of course I will sign it," responded Madame Felix. "I quite understand that there is always a risk. At the same time, I would like to tell you, Mademoiselle, that I think you and your comrades are brave women to stay here to help the mothers look after their children, and to see that the little ones do not remain without a chance of education."

"Will it be a real school?" asked Robert. "With benches and a blackboard and lots of pens and pencils."

"Yes, I promise you it will be interesting," said the teacher. "We will even have the maps on the walls, so that you will have no excuse not to study hard. What is more, each school will have a name. The first one, which you will attend, will be known as the 'Joffre School'."

"Oh! That's fine!" shouted Robert, clapping his hands. "We shall all feel that we are little soldiers under the command of a great general. Do you know, Mademoiselle, secretly, I will call you Joffre and try to obey you as I would him."

He threw his arms around his mother's

neck, kissing her and thanking her for allowing him to be a pupil. It is not often that young people are so glad to go to school, but the children of Rheims welcomed the idea of working rather than sitting around idle in the dark, damp cellars of their homes.

The day the school was to open Robert's mother had no trouble in getting him to hop out of his bed. He was one of the earliest to arrive and that first day sixty-eight children answered to the roll call. Their mothers brought them and left them in charge of the teachers, at the same time arranging to fetch them when they were dismissed from class.

No promises had been broken. It was a real school. The benches were in their places, while on the blackboards were written the words of the "Marseillaise" so that the children could commence their strange new life by singing their national anthem.

The room was only sixty yards long by twenty yards wide. There were holes through which air penetrated from above, but these apertures were too small to admit any light. Twenty oil lamps, therefore, were hung from the ceiling to provide light so that the little ones would not strain their eyes.

Each child was put through a brief examination to determine how much he or she knew. They were divided into classes and then handed books from the large piles waiting to be distributed. Robert was delighted because he was put in the second class.

The children soon spread the news that the school was great fun. Next day there were 106 present, and it was evident that the venture was an immediate success. The number of students increased so rapidly that the *École Joffre* could not accommodate them, and the authorities decided to open several similar schools.

The children were most regular in their attendance. Often they were kept awake all night by the noise of the bombardment, and, next day, one or two of them would be missing, and, when they came back to school, it was with the sad news that their mother, sister, or someone else dear to them had been killed. The teachers comforted them as best they could, trying to interest them in their work so that they might forget their sorrow. It was not surprising, however, that when a heavy bombardment started they would stop studying. One day Robert broke into tears. His teacher asked him if he were frightened.

"I am not afraid for myself," he answered. "I am safe here. I am crying because I'm afraid my mother is in danger."

The other children, terrified for their loved ones, commenced to cry, too. The teacher was gentle with them and endeavoured to stop their worrying. It was only next morning that she talked to them of their duty to their country.

"Children," she said, "many of you cried yesterday because you were afraid your parents might be killed. Now I want you to understand that children who cry because they are nervous for the safety of their dear ones are not bad children; they are good *children*, but they have not yet learned to be good *Frenchmen*. Please let me see you show more courage in the future so that you may feel you are worthy of the men who are fighting and dying for you on the front. We will now all stand and sing the 'Marseillaise'." The children received the rebuke in silence, but it is placed on record in the history of the school that not one of them was ever seen to cry again.

The little ones ran many risks in their faithful attendance at school. Once, when

Robert was entering the door to descend below ground, a great shell burst near by. The shock of the explosion threw him off his feet, and he rolled down the stairs, bruising himself badly. The teacher bathed his head, and told him that, if he wished, he might absent himself from class for a few days without losing any marks for attendance. However, next day he was back in his place. He was very proud when the teacher said, "We have heard to-day that Robert's father has been mentioned in dispatches for capturing a machine-gun nest and has been given the war cross, so that we may well say that there are two heroes in the Felix family."

In July, 1915, the Mayor of Rheims decided that, in spite of the constant enemy attacks, he would hold a prize day to reward the children who had attended school regularly under such trying conditions.

M. Thenault, who was in charge of all the underground schools, received the Mayor and other city and government officials, while a number of soldiers, who were off duty, came to the fête.

After a brief speech by the splendid old Mayor of Rheims, Dr. Langlet, the distribu-

tion of prizes and certificates began. To his great joy, Robert heard his name called. He passed before the Mayor, who shook hands with him, and at the same time presented him with his prize. It was a piece of parchment and read as follows:

Quand Même.

“In spite of all”

UNIVERSITY OF FRANCE

TOWN OF RHEIMS. 1915. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRIZE DAY

Presided over by M. Sarraut, Minister of Education,
assisted by M. Lapie, Director of Elementary
Education, and M. le Dr. Langlet, Mayor of
Rheims.

ÉCOLE JOFFRE

The pupil, Robert Felix, for his hard work and regular attendance in class in spite of great personal danger has been given this special reward.

Inspector of Elementary Education

(sd) FORSANT.

*In a champagne cellar the 332nd day of bombardment.
31st. July 1915.*

The children found the holidays all too long, and were delighted when the time came for them to return to school. In November, they lost their beloved superintendent, M. Thenault, but he was replaced by a Madame Fiquemont to whom the children quickly transferred their affection and respect.

The superb courage of the boys and girls of Rheims soon became known all over France. In one of the towns in the south the children voted that they would go without Christmas presents so that their gifts might be sent to the children of Rheims. The great parcels came early in December, but the pleasure in store for them was kept secret. The week before Christmas the children arrived one afternoon to find that all the benches had been pushed against the walls, while in the centre of the room stood a large Christmas tree loaded with toys. Every child received a present, Master Robert arriving home with a large box of toy soldiers. "Decidedly," he told his mother, "I have never been, and never shall go to as nice a school as the *École Joffre*."

The bombardment was not so heavy in the winter as it had been during the rest of the

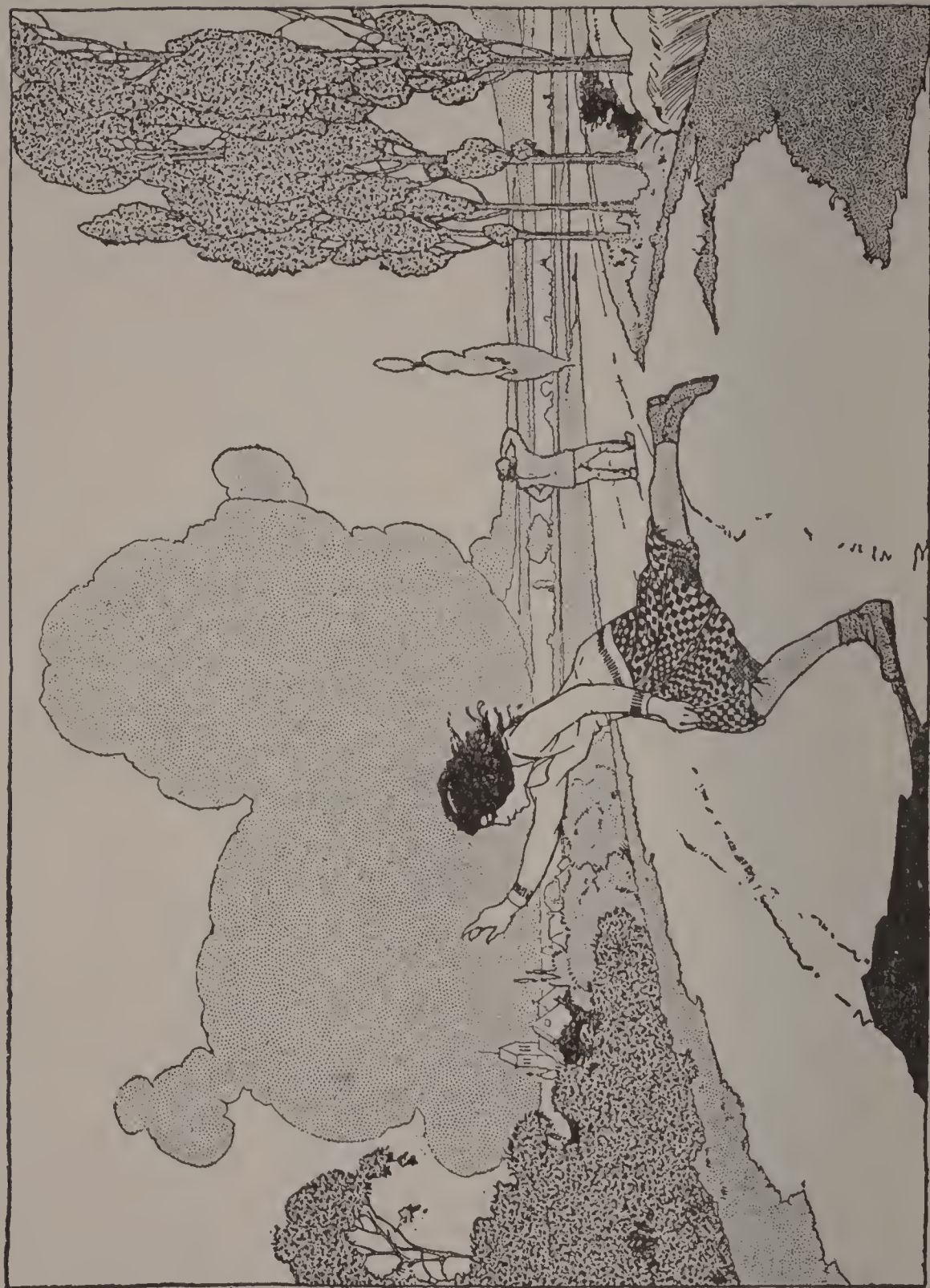
year. The authorities, however, were given warning of a new danger. When the children got to school one morning they found a package waiting for each of them on their desks. Robert was the first to open his and pull out a gas mask. All the children were instructed how to put them on and were placed on their honour not to go out on the streets without them. Some of them were a little afraid of the strange objects and were inclined to rebel. But Robert said, "We are just like real soldiers now that we have gas masks."

From that time on the children never came to school without their masks on. It was really a most necessary precaution. Otherwise, had a gas shell burst near them, they might have been asphyxiated.

Even this new danger did not prevent them from going to their classes. Until the Germans had been pushed back and Rheims was safe from bombardment, they continued to work underground. In many houses, at the present time, one of the proudest possessions of the family is the certificate earned by the child for regular attendance, and hanging beside it his little gas mask.

When Robert's father returned he told him that he thought more of his son's certificate than he did of his own medal, and that, when he realized the courage of the children, it made him feel that the French soldiers had fought that a new and even more splendid generation of Frenchmen might rule over France.

LOUISE HAUMONT



"Across the road she darted, and reached the wood without being seen"

LOUISE HAUMONT

THE great French Fort de Troyon is situated on a wooded hill not far from St. Mihiel.

It was a strategical point in the French line of defence and, consequently, a large number of France's finest soldiers were stationed there.

In the early days of the war the men of the garrison came down every day to the near-by village to purchase fresh vegetables and fruit. They were always welcomed enthusiastically by the villagers who could not do too much for the brave soldiers who were defending France.

Not only did the villagers supply them with fruit and vegetables, but nearly every day one or another of the women baked a good supply of cakes and sent them back to the fort as a present to the men.

Above all, the soldiers were loved by the children. Perhaps they realized that those

strong men, far away from their own dear babies, needed much sympathy and affection. Day after day the little ones went out to meet the troopers as they came down the straight white road leading to the village, and, hanging to their coat tails, accompanied them back to the entrance to the fortress.

The soldiers encouraged the children to play with them. They always had new and wonderful tales of adventure to tell, and they brought their small friends all kinds of queer wooden and bone toys which they had carved during the hours they were off duty. There was not a child in the village who had not a cannon, or a wagon, or a doll that the men had made.

Louise Haumont was a particular favourite. The good-natured troopers teased her because at twelve years of age she was still quite small; but they were very fond of the blue-eyed, golden-haired little maid who bestowed her favours impartially. Each morning she went out early into the fields and picked a bouquet of the lovely wild flowers to give to one of the men, a different one each time, so that not one of her friends could feel slighted or jealous. The lucky man would place the

bouquet in his cap and when he got back, present it to the commander, so that little Louise was well known in the Fort de Troyon.

The enemy advanced rapidly, and were so skillful in cutting the lines of communication of the French Army that they were able to approach the Fort de Troyon before the commander could receive any warning of the nearness of the invaders.

One night, late, the villagers were surprised by the arrival of a troop of Uhlans. The Germans knew through their spies that the French troops came to the village every day. If they could take them prisoners it would reduce the strength of the garrison of the fort to such an extent that by launching a blow immediately they might hope to capture it.

They took all possible precautions to hide the fact that they were in possession of the village. The German commander was leading only a raiding party and there were no troops behind to reinforce him if he were attacked. Sentries, disguised as peasants, were placed at all points, and the men were concealed in the houses, while they placed their machine guns in such positions that,

once the French troops were in the village, they could open fire on them.

The officer in command of the Germans sent for the mayor of the village, and told him to inform the inhabitants that they were forbidden to leave their houses, and that any one who tried to go out would be shot at sight, without trial of any kind.

Much against his will, the mayor was forced to issue the order. It grieved the people, but they saw no way of rebelling against it. They knew only too well that the next morning the Frenchmen would return as usual and, falling into the ambush, would be killed or captured.

In all the households there was but one thought: How could they let the garrison know? It seemed almost impossible to get word to them because every house in the village and every road was guarded. They knew that, in spite of the severe penalty, the German commander was afraid that someone might be willing to take the risk in order to warn the commander of the fort. If there had seemed any possibility of success many of them would have made the attempt, but they realized that the German commander

would not hesitate to carry out his threat and that any one who dared to go out into the street would certainly be killed.

Louise Haumont heard her parents expressing their fear for the safety of the French soldiers and determined that she would see whether she could do anything to save them. The child understood the danger she would run if she tried such a mission, and did not tell any one of her plan. Willing to give her own life for her friends, she knew her mother and father would never allow her to set out on such a hazardous expedition.

The German commander had instructed the soldier in charge of each house to count the people in the family. It was by a piece of good luck that Louise was absent in a neighbour's house when the Germans arrived in the village, and had been entered on the list as belonging to that household. She had observed when she came back home that there was a notice on the door saying that a man, woman, and three children resided therein. They had counted her brother and sisters but had not included her. Louise was quick to remark this and to wonder if she could not turn it to advantage.

The family sat up nearly all night waiting for daylight, everyone far too excited to want sleep. However, one by one they dozed off. At dawn, Louise came in from the room where she had been sitting and opened the door as quietly as she could. The German sentinel heard her and would have stopped her but she pointed out to him,

“I do not belong to this house. There are the three children lying there in a corner. I have just been waiting for the light to go to my own home. Please let me by. I shall get a terrible scolding from mother who must be worrying about me.”

The soldier, half dazed by lack of sleep, looked at the notice on the door, and, seeing that only three children were supposed to be in the house, without thinking of the consequences, let Louise pass. Down through the garden she crept and, as her home was on the outskirts of the village, reached the open country immediately.

She kept as much as she could in the shadow of the bushes surrounding the fields, and came at last to a road that she must cross. She found that it was guarded by what appeared to be a peasant walking up and down,

but she knew quite well that it was a Uhlan, and that the man had his hand on his pistol ready to shoot any one who disobeyed the German commander's orders. Down behind the hedge she dropped, lying flat on the ground. She was dressed in a dark green frock which blended with the leaves and helped screen her from the sentry's observation. She was careful to make no sound, as even the rustling of a leaf might arouse the man's suspicion and lead to her discovery. Through a small hole in the hedge she watched the man patrolling to and fro. It annoyed her to be held up that way because she knew that if she could only cross the road she would be in comparative safety, since on the other side was a small wood, and between it and the fort large fields of waving corn.

Louise smiled to herself when she remembered that she was so short that, once safely in the fields, she would be entirely hidden by the corn.

"If only I can reach the fort," she thought, "the men will be sorry they ever teased me because I am so small. It will be my turn to laugh at them."

The sentry was so vigilant that Louise must

have crouched on the ground more than an hour before she saw her opportunity. The Uhlan turned his back for a minute and looked out over the fields where he thought he saw someone moving, shading his eyes with his hands, for the sun had just risen. Across the road she darted, and reached the wood without being seen. Again she kept quiet for a time, until she was sure she had not been noticed; then slowly she worked her way out of the woods and through the cornfields until she came to the first trench before the fort. Here she was accosted by the French sentry.

“Where are you going, little Louise?” he asked. “You should still be in bed dreaming.”

“I must see the commander of the fort at once,” replied the child. “Let me go in.”

The soldier, smiling, patted her on the head.

“The commander is too busy to be worried by chattering little girls. Go back to your breakfast, and don’t be late for school, or you will be punished and will not be able to play with your comrades or come to meet us. Who knows, when I come down into the village, whether I may not have a present for you?”

Louise insisted, but the soldier said he could not allow her to enter the fort.

“But I want to tell the commander that the Prussians are in the village!” she exclaimed, finally.

“Oh!” said the soldier, startled. “Why didn’t you say that at once?”

He had no reason to doubt the child’s truthfulness, so he called immediately for one of his comrades and told him to conduct Louise into the fort. The soldier was astonished to see his little friend afoot so early in the morning, but when she told him her errand, he saw that she reached the commander without any further delay.

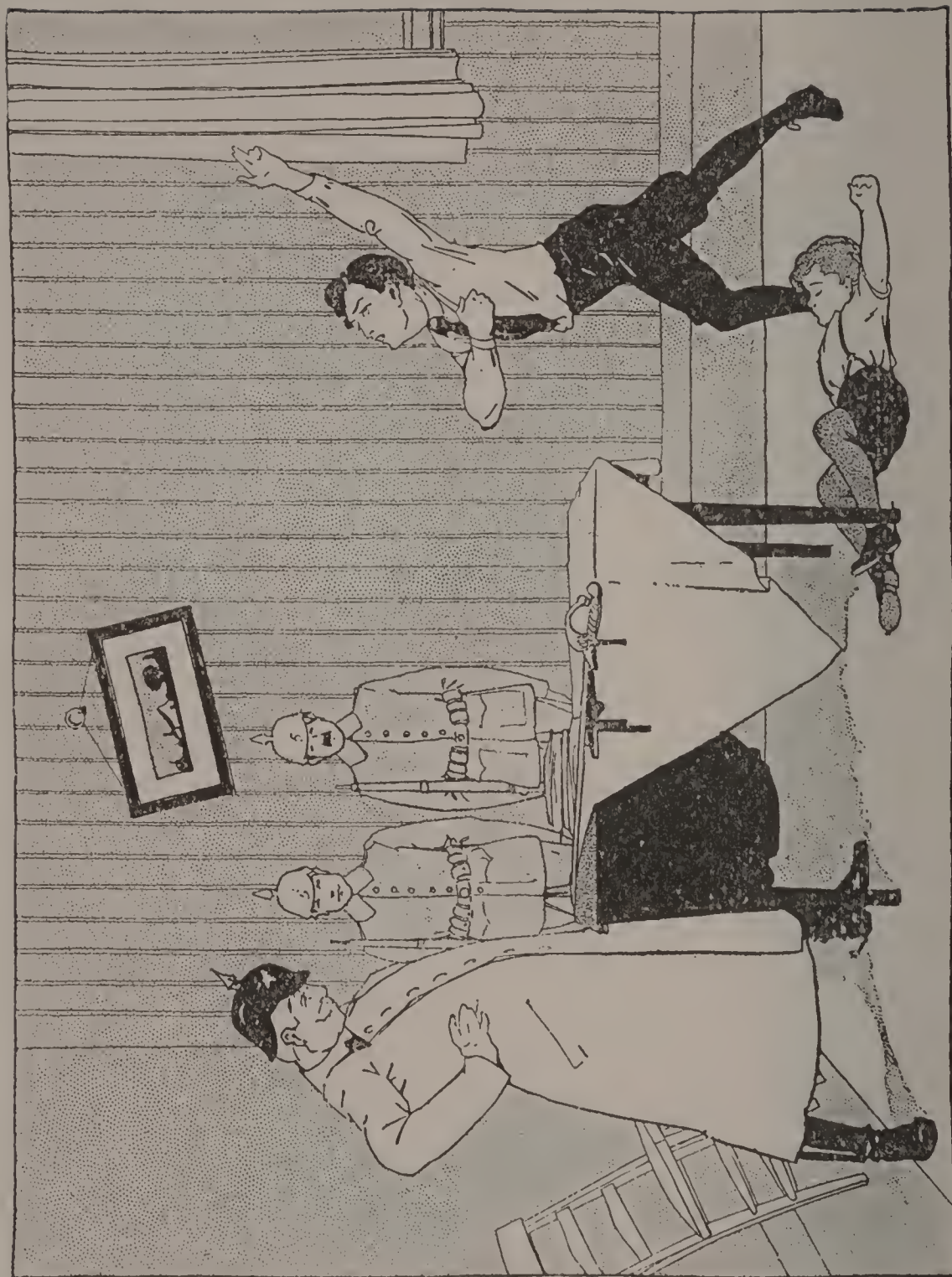
Louise told her story in detail and with wonderful intelligence for one so young. The officer ordered his man to give her breakfast, and told her to wait, while he gave instructions for the defense of the fort under the new conditions. Returning to the child, he said:

“You undertook a dangerous mission in coming to let us know of the arrival of the enemy; we shall never be able to thank you enough. You are not only a dear little girl who has helped to keep my men cheerful, but you are as brave as you are good. You must stay here

for the present, but I hope that you will be able to go home this evening."

The commander issued an order for none of the men to leave the fort. Having learned from Louise approximately the number of Germans in the village, late that night he left enough men behind to defend the fort and launched an attack against the enemy. The latter, believing their presence to be unknown, were taken by surprise, and forced to retire in disorder, many of them remaining as prisoners in the hands of the French.

LOUIS AND MARCELLE DENISOT



“‘Now he is dead, and cannot speak, shoot me! For I will
never answer any questions you may put to me!’”

LOUIS AND MARCELLE DENISOT

EYES right! Attention! Forward!”

The little army of twenty boys led by Louis Denisot marched up the village street. Behind him, carrying the flag, walked Marcelle. He was the youngest warrior, and owed the fact that he was standard bearer entirely to favouritism. Was he not the baby brother of the great General Louis? The general was obliged to spend all his time drilling the men. He would have liked to arrange some sham fights, but not one of the other boys would consent to be a German and take a licking from the French army. Anyway, it did not matter much; it was great fun to shoulder their wooden guns, to flourish their tin swords, and to charge an imaginary enemy whose strength, in all instances, was supposed to be greatly superior to their own. There was an underlying note of gravity in the boys' play. The great war had already

lasted a year and secretly they hoped that some day they might be allowed to take their place in France's army.

Louis was acknowledged leader by all the other lads. He was eleven and a half years old and had taken his self-appointed task as general seriously to heart. Whenever he could get one of the real soldiers to spare him a few moments of his time, he would learn the army drill, and, in turn, instruct his comrades. If any one of them showed signs of slackness or inattention, he would rally his army around him, and tell some tale of heroism that he had heard from the troopers.

Once when they were passing near a group of men, the soldiers called to Louis.

"If you are not engaged in any serious strategical attack, General," said a corporal, "I will tell you something that happened the other day. I saw the great General Petain, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, returning to his headquarters. He passed a band of small boys playing at soldiers in the street. They were dressed in paper hats, and carried wooden swords not half so good as yours, and were going through the military exercises. General Petain stopped to watch

them. At last, he beckoned to the boy who was acting as officer, and said,

“‘You have a fine body of men under your command. I know a good soldier when I see one. I am Petain.’

“‘Isn’t that funny?’ replied the boy. ‘I, too, call myself Petain, just to make the other boys obey me, and I am the Commander-in-Chief of this army.’

“The great general was much amused. He called for one of his aide-de-camps, who soon returned with a small parcel.

“Turning to the child the general said to him, ‘Here is a sugar stick; it is a baton for you. Who knows whether later on both you and I may not earn a “Maréchal’s Baton?”’”

“That shows that General Petain thinks we children are worth while,” answered Louis, and, catching sight of his army standing at ease, he shouted to them, “To work, lazy ones! Get into line! March!” and away they went.

Not only did Louis drill his men, but he tried to make them feel that they were patriots; and when one of the boys called out thoughtlessly to little Marcelle, “Come along

to play and bring the flag with you," he rounded on him sharply. "Marcelle can go with you, but he will not take the flag. You cannot *play* with the flag."

The Denisot children had led such a hard life that it was not surprising that Louis had developed strength of character out of proportion to his age. Their father had died when Marcelle was only a year old, and their mother, grieving for him, had followed him shortly after to the grave. They were left in charge of an old uncle, a gruff, stern man who paid little attention to them, so that they were accustomed to roam about the country as they wished, finding their happiness as best they could. Louis, having carried Marcelle as a baby in his arms, had grown up with a deep love and a sense of fatherly protection for him. When Marcelle was old enough to play with him, Louis led him into all kinds of mischief; but really, he was proud of his young brother, and held himself responsible for his welfare.

There was never anything occurring in the district that the two boys did not discover in the course of their wanderings. When the farmers wanted news of the next village and of

what was taking place there, they would inquire of Louis, feeling certain he would know everything that was happening.

The farm where the children lived was only a short distance behind the French lines. Late in 1915 there was much going on at all times to interest them. The troops were constantly passing to and fro from the trenches. Louis marched to the outskirts of the village with the regiments going up the line, and he always tried to meet the men returning from the fight. At night he and Marcelle would sit with the soldiers around their campfires, and listen to their tales. It was in this way that they first learned of the real danger menacing their country, of the courage of those who had died, and that a man must give his life rather than betray his country or his comrades.

"It is hard that we are only children, Marcelle and I," said Louis one evening to the soldiers. "There seems to be nothing we can do to help. I drill the boys but I am afraid the war may be finished before any of us are old enough to serve our country."

"You children have already helped us," answered a sergeant, his face flushing with

anger and his eyes filling with tears as the memory of a boy's death came to him.

"Do you know that a Boy Scout only fourteen years old died for his country? He knew that a number of French soldiers, cut off from their comrades during a retreat, were hiding in a cave on the hillside. During the day he would collect what food he could from the villagers, and put it into a large basket which he carried out at night to the Frenchmen, thus feeding them right under the noses of the Germans without the enemy finding out what he was doing.

"A traitor told the enemy that the child could give information as to where the Frenchmen were concealed. The Scout was immediately arrested and brought before a German officer to be examined.

"'You must tell us at once where to find the Frenchmen or you will be shot! You deserve to be killed anyway for deceiving us and feeding the men.'

"'You are wasting time,' replied the boy. 'I will not tell you where the soldiers are hiding, nor will I go near them again for fear you might send someone to follow me.'

"Refusing to say another word, he walked

straight to a telegraph pole near by, placed himself against it, and shouted to the officer, 'Order your men to shoot me, I die for France.'

"The Germans, infuriated by his obstinacy, commanded his execution. Later on, we found a note in the diary of a German soldier which read as follows:

"A traitor has just been shot—a little French lad belonging to one of those Gymnastic Societies which wears a Tricolour button. I believe they are called Boy Scouts. The poor little fellow, in his infatuation, wanted to be a hero, and out of bravado refused to answer the question our captain put to him. The prisoner was asked in French if he knew where some soldiers were concealed. He did not deny that he could give the information, but refused to supply it. He went with a firm step to a telegraph pole and stood against it, the green vineyard behind, while he received the volley of the firing party with a proud smile on his face. Foolish lad! It was a pity to see such wasted courage."

There was silence for a few minutes. Then one of the men sitting near Louis said:

"The 'wasted courage' was the spirit of France which the Germans will never understand. That spirit is more magnificent than

bravery, more splendid than heroism, more august than martyrdom. It is the spirit which makes it possible for the people of France to have one desire, to live one life, and when called on, to die one death. Isn't that true, Louis and Marcelle?"

Marcelle hesitated. After all, he was only six years old and hated the thought of dying. Finally he answered, "If I had been the Boy Scout I should have tried to run away when the Germans were not looking."

Louis placed his hand over his brother's mouth and remarked, "Pay no attention to him. Marcelle is too young to understand. I promise you, sergeant, I would not have tried to escape." He clenched his little fist and his eyes blazed. "I should have tried to fight, and what is more, some day I *will* fight! And I'll avenge the death of that Boy Scout."

Poor, brave little Frenchman!

The boys were out late one evening when four traction engines passed down the main street, dragging great guns behind them. It was the first time they had seen such large cannons, so they followed behind them some four miles out from the village and

watched the men put them in place. They thought it immensely amusing to see the precautions taken to hide them. First, the soldiers placed over them cloths covered with fine green straw to imitate grass, while on top of the cloths they affixed branches and shrubs until only the muzzles of the cannons peeped out, making the guns look like small green hillocks.

The soldiers were so busy at first that they did not notice the children. When they found that they were observing them, they explained that the guns were being camouflaged to hide them from the enemy aviators, and that it was most important that they should not be discovered as they were of a new type and the French military authorities were anxious to test them.

“To-night the enemy will hear our quartette sing. I rather think they will not like the melody—they would give much to know just where these cannons are hidden,” said one of the artillerymen. “You children must remember that France expects you to be silent. You must not inform even the other people in the village that you have seen them. Now run home as quickly as you can. We shall

start firing almost immediately, and the noise would deafen you."

"Of course I shall not tell any one and I will see that Marcelle has no chance to chatter," replied Louis.

"I would not say anything, anyway," protested Marcelle.

"Perhaps you would, and perhaps you wouldn't," added Louis, "but I do not trust you, since you were coward enough the other night to say that if you were questioned by the Germans you would try to escape."

The soldiers laughed at the children's quarrel, and ordered them again to clear off as fast as they could. Louis would have liked to stay to see the guns fired, but, taking Marcelle by the hand, he started to scamper off in what he believed to be the direction of their home.

After travelling for a long time Louis realized that they must have lost their way. It was pitch dark, making it impossible for him to see any landmark to guide him, while Marcelle lagged behind whimpering, saying that his feet were sore and that he could walk no farther. Louis urged him to go forward, but after nearly an hour had elapsed without their

finding the village, he knew that unless he could carry Marcelle, they must stop. He tried to lift him in his arms, but the boy was far too heavy, so he decided they had better wait for daylight. Cuddling together to keep warm they chose a dry spot and lay down to sleep.

They could not rest for a long time for the four cannons opened fire and the enemy replied in like manner, endeavouring to locate and destroy the French guns.

“Those are our guns,” said Louis to Marcelle. “I bet you the Germans hate them. One good thing, they will never find them hidden away up there.”

Finally, the guns were silent and the two children dropped off to sleep. Louis was awakened next morning by a kick in the ribs and, opening his eyes, he saw a party of German soldiers watching him. He realized at once that they had wandered the night before beyond the French defences into the German lines. He woke Marcelle, telling him not to be frightened, and, sitting up, the children looked at the enemy soldiers. The men were talking among themselves. At last one of them, who spoke bad French, shouted to the boys, “Get

up on your feet and stand at attention. Now answer me truthfully. Why are you sleeping out here in the open? Do you live in one of the villages that now has the happiness to be under German rule?"

"Thank goodness we do not belong to any place where you are," responded Louis. "There is a tricolour flag of France above our home. We come from the village over yonder behind the French lines. We lost our way in the dark last night."

"A likely story," replied the German. "Do you think I believe it for one moment? You children are the best spies of the French Army—we know your intelligence department uses you to get information about our movements. We will take you to our officer, and you can repeat your tale to him. You will be lucky if you escape with your lives and are only punished by being sent to work in the fields or in the ammunition factories in Germany."

Marcelle's face was white and he was trembling with fear. Louis did his best to encourage him, as, with heads erect, they were marched between the soldiers back to the officers' quarters. The men tried to keep

them from communicating with each other, but Louis managed to say to Marcelle:

“Remember, when you are questioned, you know nothing.”

Marcelle nodded his head to show that he had understood.

When they were brought into the presence of the officer and he found out from the soldiers the district to which they belonged, it was easy to see that he was both pleased and interested. He called the boys to him and asked:

“Are you not tired after walking so far and sleeping in the open air?”

“That will not hurt us. We have often done it before,” Louis replied, doggedly.

“Still, you must be hungry,” continued the officer. “Sergeant, take them away, do not allow them to talk to each other, but see that they have a good breakfast.” He even went to his bag and took out two sticks of chocolate, handing one to each child. Evidently he was anxious to win the boys’ confidence by posing as their friend.

Louis refused the chocolate, but Marcelle’s face lit up with smiles when he saw the candy. Louis watched him anxiously. He did not

like to see his brother accepting favours from the enemy, nor to think that he might be capable of making friends with them and, without knowing the importance of the information he was giving, supply them with the facts they wished to learn. He was not reassured when at breakfast, in spite of the strict order given to them not to speak to each other, Marcelle said:

“I am thinking of that Boy Scout, Louis. He must have been foolish or rude to the officer to make the Germans kill him. I shall not try to run away. They are kind people. I have not had any chocolate for over a year and it tastes awfully good.”

Before Louis could warn him that he distrusted the leniency that was being shown them, the soldier on guard commanded them to be silent.

After they had eaten all they wanted, the officer sent for them. On the way to the tent Louis suddenly started to sob. Marcelle could not understand the apparent collapse of his brother's attitude of proud defiance and disdain. He could not read his thoughts and know that although Louis loved him with passionate tenderness, he had that moment

made his decision—his brother must not live to betray his country.

The officer was sitting in a small room in one of the cottages when the boys were ushered in.

“What are your names?”

“Louis and Marcelle Denisot.”

“Do you love France?”

“Yes.”

“Have you been taught to hate Germany?”

“Yes.”

“You must not say that. Have we not been good to you? We should always be just as kind if you only obeyed us and recognized that Germany is the greatest country in the world.”

“I hate Germany,” reiterated Louis.

The officer bit his lip to hide his rising anger and tried to smile.

“I see you have strength of character.” He added, “That means you are intelligent and will have enough sense to answer a question I want to put to you. We were bombarded last night and early this morning by some guns which our aviators have not been able to locate. They must be hidden somewhere in the district from which you come. Have you seen them?”

Louis might have been able to plead ignorance, but unfortunately Marcelle, proud of his knowledge, said without thinking, "There are four of them—they are the largest I have ever seen."

"Be quiet, Marcelle, you know nothing," urged Louis.

The mischief, however, was done. The officer knew that the children could give him the information he wanted.

Still looking at them kindly, he continued, "I see you are bright and clever children. Now, tell me what you know about those guns. You are the eldest, Louis, and should be able to give the most exact details."

He called to one of his men to take down the boy's statement, but Louis remained silent, refusing to answer any questions, while Marcelle, awed by his brother's stern look and perhaps realizing that he had already talked too much, shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

Dropping his mask of gentleness, his face stern and hard, the officer turned to Louis.

"If you are obstinate, you will be shot."

It was then that Louis spoke.

"I will tell you all you wish. I know just

where the guns are hidden. I watched the artillerymen placing them in position. Give me a map and I will make a cross within a few yards of where they are located. But before I do it, you must grant me one request. I have always posed in the village among the other boys as a hero and a patriot. If I give you the information you want, my brother will go back some day and all the village will be told that I was a traitor. Ever since he was a baby he has been a nuisance to me, and I should be glad to be free of him. I will tell you where the guns are hidden if you will first shoot my brother, so that when I see his dead body, I can be sure that none of my friends will ever know I betrayed France."

Marcelle tried to throw his arms around his brother's neck to plead with him, but the soldiers kept them apart.

The officer thought for a few minutes—the life of one child meant nothing to him, and the information regarding the guns was of immense value. Louis stood with his head bowed, clenching his hands until his nails cut into his flesh. There passed before him in those few seconds the picture of all the happy hours he had spent with his baby brother, the

games they had played together, and the plans they had made for the time when they should be grown-ups. Yet he did not falter.

Upon the order of the officer, the soldiers led Marcelle away, the shots rang out, and the body of his brother was brought back and laid at Louis' feet.

"Now, are you satisfied?" asked the officer, as, standing up, he stretched across the table to shake hands with Louis.

The lad sprang back, striking the German across the face, and replied:

"My brother lies dead at my feet. He was too young to understand as much as I do. If I had defied you, you would have killed me and then you would have gotten the facts you wanted from him. I let you kill him, therefore, for fear he should betray France. Now he is dead, and cannot speak, shoot me! For I will never answer any question you may put to me!"

So died Louis Denisot, who gave his life and that of his little brother in order that France might live.

BABY PIERRE



*“‘If any German tried to hurt me,
I would get a big stick and fight
him’”*

BABY PIERRE

THE cottage in which Pierre lived with his mother was small but cheerful, and so clean that when he was a tiny tot he could crawl all over the floors without soiling his little pink hands and feet. The roses and jasmin climbed over the cottage walls, peeping in at the windows, nodding good day to the small man, and there was always warm milk and good white bread waiting on the table for him when the sunbeams, creeping over his cot, woke him in the mornings; always two strong hands ready to lift him from his bed.

It may have been a small cottage, but Pierre was perfectly happy, since there dwelt with him the most wonderfully kind person in the world—his mother. He was too young, just four years old, to understand why his mother would sometimes cry when she held him tightly clasped to her heart, too little to realize that it was because his father had died soon after he was born.

Sometimes his mother would speak of him to her neighbours as her only consolation. He did not know what it meant to be a "consolation," but since his mother smiled when she spoke of him that way, he was glad and his baby face would light up with joy.

He did not miss his father—after all, fathers work all day, whereas mothers are always on the spot ready to pick you up and kiss you if you fall—until in the autumn of 1914 when the other children commenced to boast of theirs.

"My father was at the Marne with Joffre," said André.

"My father has been fighting ever since the war first began," replied Jacques.

Little Pierre listened but took no part in their conversation. The other children seemed proud of their fathers, and anxious to walk hand in hand with the men in strange new clothes which they called uniforms. He asked his mother why the men had changed their clothes and she tried to make him understand. "If thy father had lived, he, too, would be fighting for France and for us. He was a brave man, little Pierre. You would have been as proud of him as the other boys are of their fathers."

Not only the fathers of his comrades wore the strange blue clothes, but all day long other men passed through the village in the same uniform. As Pierre swung on the gate before the cottage, the soldiers stopped to speak to him, or to give him small pieces of chocolate from the sacks which they carried on their backs, and sometimes they allowed him for a few seconds to hold their long rifles. His mother talked of the terrible war but Pierre thought it all great sport. Never before had so many men talked to him, never before had so many hands caressed his golden head.

Then came the day when for the first time he heard thunder which his mother seemed to fear. Before, when there had been storms with thunder and lightning, she had been brave while Pierre had cried and had taken refuge in her arms. Now she appeared terrified. She hesitated a long time before deciding to go to the next village, some four miles away, to fetch some needlework to do at home although she needed the money she would earn to buy food for herself and Pierre. At first she thought of taking him with her, but he walked so slowly, and was so heavy for her to carry, especially as she would have the

bundle of needlework with her, that she decided to leave him in the house.

She took him on her knee and made him promise that he would not go out of the cottage, not even into the garden to talk to his friends, the soldiers, if any passed that way.

"It is not thunder we hear," she said, "but the sound of cannons. I do not know whether they are our own or the enemy's, but as we hear them so plainly, they must be very near us. Play with your toys indoors, little son, and no matter who calls you, stay here."

"I will not go outside, mother," promised Pierre, "even if the tall soldier who once gave me three bars of chocolate should pass by and beckon to me. I will just pretend I do not see him."

In spite of the fact that he was only four years old, his mother knew that he would keep his word, and she started out at once so as to get back as quickly as possible.

Tired of playing with his tin soldiers, an hour or so later Pierre climbed on a chair to look out of the window. He saw a soldier dash by on horseback, and soon the church bell began to peal out a warning to the inhabitants of the village. Everyone rushed out. Pierre

could hear them shouting. There was noise and confusion everywhere. The neighbours opposite had run after the horseman. In a few minutes they were back, the women wringing their hands and calling for their children. Pierre saw them dart into the houses and come out carrying packages rolled up in sheets, even the small children struggling under heavy loads. The news had been brought to the village that the Germans, having pierced the French line, would soon be upon them and all the villagers were flying before the oncoming enemy.

Pierre was so excited that he jumped up and down on his chair, and, losing his balance, fell to the ground, striking his head against the table with such force that he lay on the floor unconscious. One of the women knocked at the door but received no reply. Anxious to hurry on without loss of time, she concluded that Madame Deslandes had taken Pierre with her.

The news of the probable invasion of the village spread rapidly. Madame Deslandes heard it on her way home. She dropped the bundle she was carrying, and dashed back to her cottage to save her little Pierre.

Pierre, who was recovering from his fall, sat watching her as she hastily got together as many of her things as she could, and placed them on a small handcart. As Pierre was still weak from the blow he had received on his head, she put him on top of the cart and, drawing it after her, started to follow the rest of the villagers in their flight. Over the rough road she travelled as fast as she could, but the cart wheels stuck so often in the soft mud that her progress was slow. She looked always ahead, dreading to gaze behind. Every few minutes she called to Pierre not to be afraid. She was out of sight of the rest of the refugees, but she stumbled bravely on, hoping against hope to catch up with them.

Suddenly one of the wheels bumped over a bundle dropped by the peasants in their flight, while, at the same time, a shell burst near by drowning the cry of Pierre as he was jerked from the handcart and thrown face down into the mud. Another shell burst on the road, a fragment struck Pierre, and he rolled over unconscious. His mother sped on, little dreaming that she had lost her boy.

Hard on the heels of the flying people came the wounded soldiers, struggling to reach a

place of safety in order to avoid being taken prisoners. Many of them looked at the child's body, but seeing that he was wounded and thinking that he was dead, they passed on their way. There was no time to be lost, no time to waste sympathy on the dead. But one of them, more tender-hearted than the rest, although wounded himself and nearly blinded with blood and mud, could not bear to think of the little body lying there to be crushed beneath the heavy cannon wheels. Throwing away his kit and his rifle, he lifted the child in his arms.

Late that night the man struggled into an improvised dressing station. The doctors bound up his wounds and attended to little Pierre. Not knowing what to do with the child, they placed him on the stretcher with the soldier, and Pierre and his rescuer arrived together at the Scottish Women's Hospital in the Abbaye de Royaumont.

The women surgeons had been notified of the arrival of the wounded. All necessary preparations had been made to receive them, so that within an hour they had operated, first on the soldier, and then on Pierre. They took a piece of shrapnel from the child's back

and the next day he was able to notice all that was going on around him. He cried bitterly at first for his mother. The girls tried to console him by promising that she would soon come to him, and as they knew it was bad for him to lie there sobbing, whenever one of them was off duty she would sit by him and talk to him to amuse him.

His wound was not serious. He suffered more from shock than from anything else, so that his recovery was rapid. His soldier friend appeared to be doing well at first, but later the doctors began to look grave, as the man did not seem to be making any effort to live. One of the doctors came to him, and said:

“We have done all we can for you. Now, you must do your part. Your nurse reports that you refuse to take nourishment at the stated hours, and that you are a very difficult patient.”

“I do not see that it matters whether I live or die,” answered the man. “I shall never be able to fight again, probably never even able to work again. I would rather be dead than pass the rest of my days as an invalid.”

“You are exaggerating your case. There

is no reason why you should not recover your former strength," replied the doctor. "Besides, you must think of those who love you and want you back home with them."

"I have no relatives, no one depends on me, and there is no one to worry about me. Why should I bother to get well?"

The doctor had a sudden inspiration. "What do you mean when you say no one depends on you? What about the child you brought in? We have not been able to find out who are its parents, so you will have to keep it yourself." Turning to one of the nurses, she added, "Go and fetch little Pierre at once."

Before the nurse left the ward, the doctor called her to one side, and whispered, "Try to make the little man understand how ill the soldier is, and that if he shows him affection he can help to save him."

The nurse found him sitting among a group of his soldier admirers. All the men, separated from their own children, were lavishing their pent-up affection on the little golden-haired stranger. She talked to him seriously for a few minutes; then leading him into the ward, placed him on the bed beside the man who

had brought him into the hospital. Pierre kissed him again and again, told him he loved him, and petted and teased him as only a baby knows how to do. Finally, he rubbed his eyes with his fat little fists, yawned sleepily, and cuddled down by his friend. With a strange new look on his face, the soldier passed his arm around him and soon they were both sleeping peacefully like two little children.

The doctor smiled. She knew that she had won her battle. From that day on the man commenced to recover, and Pierre was his inseparable companion.

When the child woke in the morning he would cry for his father. Twenty soldiers would answer to the call, but Pierre would have nothing to do with them. He kept all his affection for the man who had adopted him and had taught him to call him "Father." He would allow no one else to dress him, he would take part in no games unless the man was present; and, night after night, the soldier would walk up and down the hospital ward with the child in his arms crooning a lullaby to him until the tired little eyes would close.

Of course he should not have been there.

It was a military hospital where none but soldiers should have received attention. It was wonderful, however, how blind the officers were when they came to make their rounds of inspection. Not one of them ever managed to see the child. As a matter of fact, they knew he amused the men, and helped them to pass away the weary hours of inactivity in the hospital. They were quite glad, therefore, to overlook his presence, while the hospital staff could not bear to think of losing him.

After a thorough investigation had been made without his relatives being discovered, the doctors assisted Jacques Marot to obtain the necessary permission from the authorities to adopt legally the child he had saved. The man was overjoyed when he heard he could keep the boy, and remarked humorously, "I am lucky, doctor. It is so convenient to have a family without any of the bother of being married."

Jacques' only anxiety was that when he was well enough he would be obliged to leave the child and go back to fight for France.

"What will happen to my little son?" he asked one of the doctors. "I have no home and no relative to whom I can send him."

“Don’t you worry about the boy,” replied the doctor. “You are not the only one who loves him. We will keep him with us here so that when you are on leave you will know just where to find him and can arrange to stay near by, and spend your time with him. One of us will write you every week to tell you how he is progressing. He will learn to speak English with us, and you had better study it, too, in order to keep pace with your son.”

“I don’t want to leave the girls. I want to stay here,” Pierre chirped as he put his arms around the doctor’s neck.

“Do you love us so much, Pierre?”

“I love English puddings,” replied Pierre, smiling roguishly.

“That is cupboard love, baby, but I like to believe that in spite of pretending to be a greedy boy, you are really fond of us.”

Once entirely well, it was no easy matter to keep Master Pierre quiet. The members of the hospital staff were too busy to look after him much, and the men took it upon themselves to entertain him as best they could. A tall sergeant, who had been severely wounded in the leg, had a brilliant idea. He formed a story club, making each of the members think

of a tale to tell Pierre at bedtime, provided he had behaved well during the day. They could have recounted to him many anecdotes of the heroism of their comrades, but he was too young to understand them, so they only told him tales of the children who had helped during the war.

When Pierre heard the news he was immensely pleased, and promised to do his best to earn his bedtime story.

Young Jean Michel commenced the first evening:

“This is the second time I have been wounded. The first time I received treatment in what had been a large boys’ school before the war. Half of the building had been turned into a hospital, while the pupils worked and played crowded together in the other half. It did us good to hear them shouting and laughing as they frolicked in the small courtyard. When I was well enough to leave the ward, I went out often to sit on a gallery surrounding the playground and watched them.

“They seemed so light-hearted and happy that I wondered sometimes if they understood that a terrible war was going on so close to

them. When people do not hear the guns they do not think so much about the cold, wet trenches, and the men who are dying by the thousands out on the battlefield.

“We men were all delighted when we heard, one morning that the children, of their own free will, had asked permission to be allowed to come to visit us.

“Each of them arrived with a packet of cigarettes, or some fruit. I wanted to find out how much they knew about the war, and I picked out one rosy-cheeked boy about twelve years old, and started to talk with him. I had noticed that in all the games he took a leading part. He was a manly little chap, yet seemed one of the most carefree of the scholars.

“‘How do you like to have so little room to work in and to be obliged to give up so many games you used to play?’ I asked him.

“‘Oh! we do not mind a bit,’ he answered. ‘We are only too glad to know that the soldiers are in our class rooms, and that they have our large playground to sit in when they are getting well. You must not imagine because we laugh and play that we do not think of the wounded lying suffering so close to us. Do you know we boys are all drilling

under a military instructor, and we have never worked as well as now? We feel that it is the only way in which we can show the men that we appreciate all that they are doing for us. I wish you could see the difference between our reports this term and last. The masters say it is too good to last, but I believe they think we will try to "carry on" and do our best.'

"'That's fine!' I said. 'I am sure it would make my comrades happy if they knew you were doing that for them.'

"The lad's face became suddenly grave and he added, 'I only wish we could do more. We understand perfectly well that the soldiers are dying so that we may grow up "*Not only Frenchmen, but freemen.*"'

"I did not fail to repeat the story to all my comrades. You can imagine, Pierre, that it was a great consolation to us all to know that these boys realized that we were fighting for them and for France."

"Certainly the children want to remain French. That reminds me of a saying of my own little girl," said one of the soldiers who was sitting on the foot of Pierre's bed. "She came with me to the station to see me leave for the

front. She was too little to know that I was running a great risk and that she might not see me again, but she had her own idea of why I had to go to war.

“‘Fight hard, daddy, won’t you?’ she said. ‘You must win because I do not want to be a German when I am a big girl.’”

Next night, one of the men said, “Gaston was boasting of his little girl last night. Let me tell you this evening, Pierre, why I think I should be proud of my small son.

“Soon after I left for the front he was taken ill with measles. During the first days of his sickness he had a high fever, but as soon as he was well enough to see what was taking place around him, his mother noticed that he followed her every movement with his eyes, and that he could not bear to have her away from his side for a moment. Naturally, while he was dangerously ill, she had no time to think of me. When he was better, she sat down one afternoon near the boy’s bed and commenced to write to me. It was only then that he told her why he had been watching her so closely.

“‘Are you sending a letter to father?’

“‘Yes, dear. He must be anxious because I

have not given him news of us both since you were taken sick.'

"'I am glad you did not write before,' he replied. 'I have been looking out for the time when you would send him a letter. I want you to promise me mother, that you will not tell him I have been so ill, because if he is worried about me, he will not be able to fight as well as he should.'

"To please him, his mother did not mention his illness in that letter, but when he was absolutely out of danger she told me for she realized that I would be a better soldier if I knew how brave the boy I was fighting for was, and that it would help me."

"I am sure it did help," said an artilleryman, who was one of Pierre's devoted followers. "The children once gave me a good lesson in patriotism."

"When the war broke out and the order to come at once into the army reached me, I was inclined to grumble. My business was doing well, and I knew that it would go to ruin if I had to leave it, for there was no one to take my place. I was engaged to a very dear girl whom I hoped soon to marry, so that it seemed to me that my whole future looked black when

I was called to serve France. I am not excusing myself, but it was hard to leave everyone and everything I loved to go to join the army. I understood that the country must be defended. Yet I would have been quite glad, at that moment, to let others do it for me.

“There is no need to tell you men of the difficulty in bringing about quiet, orderly organization during the first days of the War. It was forced upon us when we were not prepared, and, as everyone of you present was mobilized in August, 1914, you know as much about the chaos of those days as I do. It was the fourth day after we had started that our train drew up at a junction and we were given permission to get out to stretch our legs. We had been in that particular train more than thirty hours, travelling twenty-eight men in a cattle truck, with nothing but small wooden benches to sit on and straw on the floor on which to lie down if we wanted to sleep. We were delighted, therefore, to be free to walk, so we poured out of the train like a pack of schoolboys just out of class.

“The station was in a perfect uproar. Everyone was shouting and running, apparently without knowing clearly where he

was going. From some of the platforms trains were steaming out laden with men, guns, and ammunition, while at others, hospital trains were arriving filled with wounded. Amid all that confusion and din I came on three little boys playing together. They had a large piece of chalk with which they were writing on the sides of the trucks that were going up to the French front, some, alas, to fall into German hands. I drew near to watch them. I remembered that in my own boyhood days it had always amused me to be let loose with a piece of chalk and to scribble on any wall I could find. I expected to laugh at what they were writing. There were so many things those boys might have chalked up on the wagons, insults against the enemy, slang phrases, and so on but on each car they put just the same words, *J'aime la France*, I love France.

“I turned away with my heart burning with a new spirit. Through my brain ran the phrase, *and a little child shall lead them*. I found a spot where it was quieter than the centre of the station and bowed my head, thinking of my annoyance when I was called on to defend my country, of the excuses I had

tried to find to be allowed to stay behind the lines, and I realized for the first time why I was going to fight. Knew that like the other men of France I was fighting for my country and would die for her because I loved her. Since that day I have never regretted answering the call."

"If I had a piece of chalk, I would write, 'I love soldiers,'" said Pierre, as he beamed on the men around him.

"You love your pillow, now," they answered. "Close your eyes, or we will never tell you another story."

Sad but true to relate, for some days Pierre was far from good. He crept into the kitchen and stole some cake, so that the nurses asked the soldiers to punish him by not telling him tales. When he said that he was sorry and had promised not to do anything as bad again, he was restored to favour.

"When we were last talking together," said one of the men, "you remarked, Pierre, that you would have scratched on the wagons. 'I love soldiers.' There are other boys who would write the same thing, I think. Forain, the great French caricaturist, once drew a picture of two tired, wet-to-the-skin French

soldiers, just out of the trenches sitting beside a campfire heating coffee.

“‘This is a terrible war,’ said one of the men to the other. ‘Do you think we will win it in the end?’

“‘Yes,’ replied the other man, ‘provided the civilians hold out behind the lines.’”

“Counting the children as civilians,” said Adrian Buchet, “we can certainly say that they have held out. I have seen them stripped to their waists, the sun beating down on their little bare backs, with handkerchiefs around their heads, reaping and binding the sheaves of corn, watering the horses, and even directing the plough. Quite forgetting that there were any such things as holidays, whenever they were free from school they worked side by side with the women and the old men.

“As I passed through the railway stations on my way to the front, more often than not, there were groups of girls and boys helping the Red Cross Canteen distribute food and hot drinks, filling the men’s pipes, taking letters from them to post, fetching them newspapers or magazines, in fact, trying in a hundred ways to comfort a trainload of men weary from the long journey. In their homes the little

ones knitted woollen comforts. Even the boys learned to knit. I had a scarf sent me by a lad myself with this cheerful letter." The soldier dived into his sack for a crumpled missive and read:

"DEAR SOLDIER:

I am only a little boy but I wish I were older and stronger so that I could fight side by side with you and my father. The scarf is my own work. If it is not very well knitted, please forgive me. I am very clumsy and I often slip a stitch. Still, I want you to know that all the time I was working I was thinking of you.

I wish you a happy Christmas and I will pray the good God to watch over you.

Your little friend,

JEAN MEROT

Seven years old."

"I want to tell you that I am specially lucky. I am the godson of a whole school," said another soldier. "You know that nearly every French family adopted a man who had no one else to look after him, wrote to him, or sent him presents to cheer him up while he was in the trenches, and that the families expected their godsons to spend their leave with them. I gave my name in to my captain, saying that I wished someone would take an in-

terest in me. You can imagine my surprise when I heard that I had been adopted by a whole school. Each child brought a small sum of money every week, and with the total amount the teacher bought parcels of goodies for me, and sent them up to me at the front.

“I was thoroughly spoiled by my godfathers and godmothers, but, above all, I looked forward to their letters.

“At Christmas, when I was in hospital, for the first time one of my young comrades wrote me:

“DEAR SOLDIER AND MY GODSON:

If I had a knife with seven blades like the one I dreamed about the other night I would send it to you. But you know we have had no Christmas presents this year, our mothers are alone and they are too poor to buy us anything. None of us cry, except those who have had bad news of their fathers, or brothers. You must be glad you have no little children of your own or else they would be crying because you are wounded. Most of us envy you,—we should like to fight for France and be wounded. When you come back, please come at once to see us. You will have children hanging on to your coat tails, children climbing on your shoulders and on your knees.

The other day Gaspard, who sits next to me, went into another room, and came back with the number of

service stripes to which you are entitled chalked on his coat sleeves, and he had not forgotten to add your wound stripes. He announced that he was our godson home from the front. Just for fun we pretended it was you and gave him a great welcome. He enjoyed it until the girls tried to kiss him and then the game was smashed up. We shall all want to kiss you. I hope you won't be as horrid as Gaspard and will let us do it. We little girls will be so proud to walk with you. We shall have to take turns to hold your hand while all the passers by will envy us. Please get well soon and be sure to write us often. Our teacher reads your letters aloud to us; then she writes them up on the blackboard so that we can make copies to show to our mothers.

I wish you a happy Christmas and hope you will never be wounded again.

Your godmother,

PAULINE.

P. S. We do not want you to be killed but we would like you to get a medal. A boy in the school near us has a father with a medal and we are sure you are just as brave.

"I wonder how many children had no Christmas presents this year, and how many of them would be glad to be warm and well fed like you, Pierre," asked another soldier.

"I am happy," said Pierre. "I wish all the other children could be, too. If I were rich I would buy them all Christmas presents,

everyone of them. If I had enough money I would buy two for each of them."

"Good boy," replied the soldier. "If you'll just remember that you will be happy when you make other people happy, Pierre, you'll know how to find the greatest joy in the world."

"It is not always the lack of presents that makes the children sad," added the tall sergeant. "I was passing one evening late down the Champs Élysée and noticed two small boys walking ahead of me weeping bitterly as they trudged along. They were in rags, both looked pale and ill, and one of them was barefooted. I caught up with them and asked:

"'What is the matter? Have you been scolded at school?'

"'Oh, no,' they answered. 'We are crying because of our dog Gyp. We have had him since he was a puppy, but he eats too much and mother has not enough food to give even to us, so she told us we must take him out and lose him. We have walked ever so far from our own quarter because we know the rich people live around here. We have tied Gyp up outside a big house; we hope the owner will see what a good dog he is and that

he will have enough bones to spare for him. He was whining and tugging at his cord, but we explained to him that we loved him and were only parting with him because if he stayed with us he would starve to death.'

"Their sobs broke out anew. 'Right about, turn,' I said, and, taking them by their hands, I went with them back to the place where they had left their dog. We found Gyp still tied to the post. He welcomed his little masters with joyful barks, trying to tell them that any good dog would rather starve with its master than live on juicy chops and steaks with a stranger. I went home with the boys and Gyp and found that the family was really in need and living in great poverty. I gave the mother some money which I had saved up and I hope that they were able to purchase enough food for some time to come, not only for themselves but also for Gyp."

"There must have been many such cases," said one of the men, "but it was hard to find them out. The children were so brave, and complained so little of their sufferings. I only wish that they could know how much the men appreciated their sacrifices and the gifts they sent. Why, the soldiers would even risk their

lives to retain a child's present. After we had been attacked one day by the Germans and were obliged to retire to our trenches, we were all astonished to see one of our men at dusk that evening wandering around in 'No Man's Land,' risking his life every minute. He appeared to be searching for something and we all thought it must be very valuable for him to take such chances to find it.

"Finally we saw him slip something into his pocket, and when he got back to us, the officer asked:

"'What were you doing out there? Don't you know you might have been killed at any minute if the enemy had opened fire on you? It is a good thing for you that they are short of ammunition and do not want to waste it.'

"'I knew it was dangerous, Captain,' replied the man, 'but during the attack I lost a pipe which I received only yesterday from a little boy, so I just went out to look for it.'"

"Undoubtedly, the attitude of the children meant much to us," added Jean Michel. "When we are up at the front we think of the children who stand behind us. After all, we soldiers are gardeners. We renew the soil with our blood, that the new plants, the young

children of France, may find nourishment. When we feel discouraged we look back to see the boys and girls growing into straight, fine men and good, clean women, that vision makes our sacrifice seem worth while."

"Do you ever meet any children quite near the front?" asked Pierre.

"Yes, indeed. Many of them live close to the firing line. They are not too unhappy, except the little ones who are in the villages that have been captured by the Germans and are under the rule of the enemy. They have quite a hard time."

"Do they let the Germans see that they are afraid of them?" questioned Pierre. "I would not notice them. If any German tried to hurt me I would get a big stick and fight him."

"I have never heard of any of them being afraid," answered the soldier. "In fact, some of our children were too daring. I heard a tale that amused me in one of the villages which we recaptured from the Germans. A boy of fourteen was detailed to wait on the German officer's mess. He carried out his task as well as he could because he wanted to show the enemy that the French knew how to do things properly. For that reason he not

only saw that the table was carefully laid, but he even superintended the food prepared for the officers by one of the women of the village who had been pressed into their service. If it did not look good to him, he would refuse to carry it to the table until the cook changed it and it seemed to him to be quite all right. In spite of all the trouble he took, the officers were always grumbling, and finding fault unnecessarily.

“One day, as he was passing from the kitchen to the mess room where the officers were sitting at table, a shell from the French guns struck the ground near by, shaking the house so that some small pieces of plaster fell from the ceiling into the dish of steaming potatoes he was carrying. The officers were quick to notice the plaster, one of them shouting to him:

“‘Take that dish away at once. That food is only fit for pigs. Give it to them.’

“The lad hesitated a moment. Then he answered, ‘Am I to understand, Herr Captain, that you wish me to give the potatoes to *your* men?’

“It was lucky for him that he was dealing with a band of fairly good-tempered officers,

otherwise he might have been severely punished for daring to suggest that the German soldiers were pigs. The German captain only cuffed him and told him not to be impertinent."

The soldier sitting next to Jean commenced to chuckle.

"I heard a very similar story in just the same way," he said.

"A German officer and ten soldiers were billeted in a farmhouse. In self-defence the farmer, his wife, and little son did their best to look after them. It was to their interest to see that their unwelcome guests were kept as good-natured as possible.

"There was one sergeant, however, who was never satisfied no matter what they gave him to eat. After one meal he called loudly for Confekt (Jam). The boy who was serving did not know what he wanted. He brought him the dessert his mother had prepared, but the sergeant pushed it on one side, and continued to shout for 'confekt.' He behaved like a naughty, spoiled child, thumped his fist on the table, and ended, finally, by boxing the boy's ears.

"The lad did not mind his anger, but his

pride arose against being struck. He knew that he had done his best, so he went straight to the officer in command who was sitting in a room alone and complained of the way the man had treated him.

“The German captain who had a child of his own about the boy’s age and realized that the people were doing all they could for him and for his men, got up from his chair and went out to interview the sergeant. He found him red in the face with anger, still yelling for ‘confekt.’ As soon as he saw the officer, he rose to salute. The captain looked at him, lifted his boot, and gave him two good kicks which landed him out in the street.

“The boy started to laugh. Turning to the captain, he said, ‘I did not know what he wanted. If I had understood that was the kind of “confekt” he wished, I should have been only too glad to give it to him myself.’”

“The captain smiled and warned him to be careful. It was all right for him to kick a German soldier, but it would have been a serious matter for a French child to try to do it.”

For Pierre and his adopted father the weeks

passed all too quickly. The soldier was gradually restored to perfect health and the doctors were obliged to report to the military authorities that Jacques Morot was fit for service. He had not shirked; on the contrary, he had asked many times whether he was not well enough to rejoin his comrades, but the doctors would not allow him to leave the hospital until they were quite sure he could stand the hard life in the trenches.

When at last they told him he was strong enough to fight again, he was at the same time happy and sad. Glad to be once more face to face with the enemy, but sorry to leave the child he loved although he knew the baby would receive every care.

"You will not spoil Pierre too much, doctor," he said. "Please remember he is to be a poor man's son and that some day he will have to work hard."

"I work hard now," answered Pierre. "This morning I washed my woolly lamb which I got at Christmas, and I helped cook clean out a pot."

"Yes, I saw you, greedy one," said the doctor. "You were scraping the sweet sauce out of the pan and licking the spoon." Then,

turning to the soldier, she added, "You need not fear. We shall be good to Pierre and, at the same time, we shall try to make a real man of him so that you may always be proud of him."

When the day of separation arrived, Pierre was inconsolable. He hung around his foster father's neck, and refused to be comforted by any one. At last the man said to him:

"Pierre, you should be with the civilians—you are not brave enough to be with soldiers. A soldier does not cry. He just salutes when he receives an order which is hard to obey, then he carries it out. You are a soldier's son. You must behave like one."

"I do not believe that a soldier never cries. I have seen tears in their eyes when they looked at me, yet I had done nothing to hurt them," answered Pierre.

"That was because they were thinking of their own children," replied Jacques, "but they never do it when they are in service."

Pierre straightened his little back and bit his lip to keep back the tears. He managed to conjure up a smile when he waved his handkerchief to his father as he drove away to

report for duty. The girls did their best to cheer the child up, while the men were, as before, his devoted slaves. Yet each morning he asked for his father. He would shout and jump for joy when the doctor called him into her room to read him a letter from Jacques. He, in turn, sent loving greetings and many promises of good behaviour whenever one of the girls was writing to Jacques. At the end of six months M. Morot came back on leave. The child was delighted to be with him again and they spent many happy hours playing together.

An officer, visiting the hospital, heard the tale of the love and devotion Jacques had shown the child he had found, and was so much impressed by it that when he was next on leave he told it at the dinner table of one of his friends, a splendid woman who was devoting her life to helping the refugees from the devastated regions of France.

The officer remarked that his hostess appeared more than usually interested.

“Where did you say the boy was found?”

“Near Soissons, Madame.”

“And his age?”

“About five years.”

“Did he speak of his parents?”

“Only of his mother; he does not appear to remember his real father, but he is perfectly devoted to the man who rescued him and who has adopted him.”

“Did the hospital authorities keep the clothes which he wore when he was brought in?”

“Yes. They still have them although they are stained and in rags. The lad was found in a blue checked suit and a warm red jacket.”

“Oh! you cannot imagine the joy you are giving me. I have in my employ, as sewing maid, a woman with a tragic history. She was brought to my hospital for refugees, suffering from brain fever. It was nearly four months before she recovered sufficiently from the shock she had received to tell us a connected story. When she was well enough she told us that, flying before the invaders, she had lost her son. She had placed him on top of some bundles and he must have fallen from the cart which she was dragging behind her. Terrified by the shells that were falling near, she had tried to push forward until she had fallen fainting and exhausted by the roadside. She was found and brought in to us. In her

delirium she talked always of her baby, and we knew the child must have existed because there were toys among her few belongings which we saved. We made all possible inquiries but could not discover that any child had been found near her.

“During the period of her convalescence I devoted a great deal of time to her case myself. I went with her to every home for refugees in or near Paris to which the child might have been taken. The police, also, made inquiries for us, but I see now where we blundered—I never thought of asking for information from the military authorities, nor of going to any of the hospitals near the place where the child had been lost. It seems almost too good to be true, but I believe you have found him. Still, there might have been other children who were lost at the same time, who might have been dressed in the same kind of clothing and even called ‘Pierre.’ Before I tell Louise your story, I will call her down and ask her to describe her boy to you. The child cannot have changed very much in eighteen months; perhaps you will be able to identify him.”

Louise was sent for to come to the dining room, and with tears in her eyes, she talked

of her little Pierre, his sunny hair, his blue eyes, his cunning ways.

“Stop,” said the young officer, while his hostess, realizing that he recognized the child, stepped forward, and put her arm around Louise for fear she might collapse when the good news was told her. “I have found the boy. He is well and happy at the Abbaye de Royaumont in the Scottish Women’s Hospital.”

If it had been possible, the mother would have left that night for Royaumont. The officer agreed to see the military authorities and get permission for her to go out next day and promised to accompany her to the hospital.

It was late in the afternoon when Madame Deslandes arrived at the old Abbaye. The administrators and the doctors, who had been told of her coming by telephone, were waiting to receive her. They were not long in establishing proof that Pierre was her boy. Madame Deslandes was able to give a description of his clothing when lost, and told them of the place near which she believed he must have dropped from the cart.

All the members of the hospital staff who were off duty were anxious to see whether the

boy would remember his mother after the long separation. He was sleeping with both arms tightly clasped around his woollen lamb, when his mother approached on tip-toe, giving a cry of joy as she clutched tightly with her hands the rail at the foot of the bed to keep from falling. The happiness of finding him was almost too much for her to bear after the long months of agony and, finally, of resignation, when she thought him dead. One of the nurses put a chair for her by the bedside, but the mother did not seem to see it. She sank on her knees, and, slipping both hands beneath him, she gently drew the sleeping child into her arms, began tenderly to rock him to and fro, to kiss him, to whisper, "My son, my little son, my baby Pierre. I am here with you. Your mother—look at me, tiny dear one—you must remember me."

The kisses woke him. His large baby eyes opened slowly. He realized that he was in the arms of someone he had missed, someone with strong yet gentle hands who in the old days had lifted him every morning from his bed, washed him, fed him, worked day and night for him, cuddled him, and sung to him until he drifted away into the fairyland of dreams.

The tears rolled down his mother's cheeks, and little Pierre patted her face.

"Don't cry, mother. Laugh," he said. "Smile at me. I am your little Pierre and father says I must be like the soldiers, and soldiers do not cry."

His mother did not appear to listen, but continued to hold him to her heart, her cheek against his, murmuring always, "Pierre, my little child, my little son, my dearest loved one."

At last she said, "I am not a soldier like you, Pierre, so you must not mind if I cry—I never thought I would have you in my arms again, yet to-day I have found you."

"Yes, mother, and I am strong and well. Feel my arms. I can fight, and father has shown me how to ride a pony."

"Father!" cried his mother. "Your father is dead, little man."

"But I have found a new father all my own," said Pierre.

The nurses told Madame Deslandes how the child had been saved and of the devotion the soldier had shown him and of the permission he had obtained to adopt Pierre. They promised to write to Jacques to tell him that the child's mother had found him, knowing, of

course, how bitter a blow it would be for the man.

Madame Deslandes arranged with the hospital staff to keep the child until she could settle in a home. Some three months later she was able to return to her own village, where she found that her cottage had not been destroyed.

She corresponded regularly with Jacques Morot, and sent him news of Pierre and invited him to come to see him whenever he could. Unfortunately, Jacques was wounded again so that a long time elapsed before he could visit Pierre and his mother. The hospital in which he received treatment was in the south of France. Had it been anywhere near, Madame Deslandes would have taken the boy to see him. When he was well enough he came to pass his time of convalescence near Pierre. The boy welcomed him with hugs and kisses. Madame Deslandes was at first shy with the strange man who yet seemed her dearest friend because of Pierre's love for him. Soon she learned to appreciate the fineness of his character and before he left again for the front they went together to Royaumont to tell the doctors and the nurses that they had settled the problem of dividing

Pierre's affection. Madame Deslandes had married Jacques Morot, so that, holding the hands of the man who was now really his father and of his dearly loved mother, the hospital staff last saw the little lad toddling away down the road to happiness.

GUSTAVE DARET



“The French soldiers let loose a mighty cheer as Gustave and his burden came near enough to the trenches for them to stretch out their arms and draw him and the captain down to safety”

GUSTAVE DARET

PIERRE DESLANDES was not the only spoiled child in the Scottish Women's Hospital at the Abbaye de Royaumont.

Gustave Daret who had been wounded in Flanders was under treatment there. Although only seventeen years old, he had already served for a year on the front.

A tall, dark stripling, he looked much older than he really was while the hardships of life in the trenches had already left their marks on his face.

As soon as the war broke out, Gustave begged his mother to allow him to join the army. She refused for some time on account of his youth. He was the last of her boys, her baby son, but, like all the women of France, she felt in her heart of hearts that she had no right to withhold him from helping to defend his country, so that when he asked her again to permit him to try to enlist as a volunteer, she said,

“Son, day and night I will be anxious until you come back. I shall know no peace of mind while you are away. But if you think it is your duty, go to the recruiting officer and see if he will take you. If the doctor passes you as fit for the hardships ahead of you, I will not offer any opposition to your joining.”

Gustave, delighted that he had won his mother over to his way of thinking, went that same day to offer himself for service and was accepted.

The recruiting officer made one condition. “You tell me you have your mother’s permission, but before you sign your engagement as a volunteer, I want you to consider for twenty-four hours whether you are doing the right thing. Remember, you are still quite young and you are the only support of your widowed mother. You must think of your duty to her as well as to your country. Go home, talk it over with her, and come back to me to-morrow when you have made your decision.”

Gustave told his mother just what had happened. They sat hand in hand, all the mother’s longing to keep her son by her side fighting against her loyalty to France.

At last, with tears in her eyes, she said to him,

“Gustave, the shell that destroyed our home killed one of your brothers. Your other brother died on the front trying to save the life of his captain. I think I should not be considered unpatriotic if I tried to keep you with me to look after me in my old age. Would you be willing to stay, son?”

Gustave hesitated a few minutes. He had already pictured himself in uniform marching forward with the troops to fight for his country. He looked at the tired, sad face of his mother, and answered,

“I will stay with you, if you cannot bear to part with me. Perhaps, after all, it is my duty to remain behind the lines to care for you.”

His mother placed her hand under his chin, lifted his head, and looking straight into his eyes, said,

“Thank you, Gustave. Now I am content. I never meant to keep you. It is true I need you, but there is an even greater mother calling you, Mother France. Do your duty as a soldier and if Providence protects you, later on you can do your duty as a son.”

Next day they went together to the recruit-

ing officer, and within a week Gustave received orders to leave with the men who were going into training. The villagers promised to look after his mother, and see that she did not lack care or affection.

Three months later he came back on leave, very anxious to show himself in uniform to his mother and to the kindly neighbours.

“I have been allowed seven days to spend with you, because we are short of men and our regiment has been ordered to the front. My captain, therefore, gave me permission to come to see you to say good-bye before we go forward.”

“But you are not properly trained. I did not expect you to be in the trenches for some time yet.”

“Not properly trained! You wait and see!” exclaimed Gustave. “I will fight so well that you will be proud of your boy.”

“I am not afraid that you will disgrace me. I only fear you may not know how to protect yourself against the peril at the front.”

“We have been well drilled by men who have been through it already. I know just what is before me,” answered Gustave.

“You will be careful, won’t you, son?”

“Yes, indeed, mother, I can’t promise you I will not avoid danger, but I shall not take unnecessary risks. Now, I want you to promise me one thing: if I am wounded come to me at once.”

His mother nodded her head—she dared not speak for she felt she might lose control of herself and cry. She remembered that he had often been at the railway station when other mothers and wives and sisters were saying good-bye to their men. She had seen them laughing, waving their handkerchiefs, singing, throwing flowers and chocolates to the soldiers, and showing no signs of grief. But as soon as the train pulled out of the station their hands had dropped to their sides, their courage had left them, and turning to each other for comfort, they had said, “Now they are gone and cannot see us, we can weep.”

Knowing that she, too, must send her son away with a smile Madame Daret, to hide her emotion, went into her kitchen and busied herself preparing some food for him.

The seven days passed all too quickly. When his leave expired, she accompanied

Gustave to the train. Taking him in her arms, she kissed him tenderly and with a last admonition, "Fight well for France," she turned and ran as if to escape from her own misery.

Madame Daret received letters from Gustave fairly regularly. He wrote her of his days and nights in the trenches, of his growing admiration for his comrades. The life had been a little hard at first. The regiment christened him "The Baby" and seemed to dread that he might dishonour them when they got into action. However, he soon proved his courage, and the men as a whole had a fatherly feeling for the lad who had volunteered his services for France.

Sometimes he would forget his promise to his mother not to seek danger unnecessarily. Between the German and French lines stood a scarecrow. One night late Gustave crept out from the trench, and tied a small French flag to the scarecrow's arm. All day long it fluttered in the breeze, to the annoyance of the Germans in the opposite trenches. They would have shot it to bits, but they could not afford to waste ammunition. At night, in spite of the watch kept from the French lines,

a German managed to sneak out and tear it down.

When Gustave saw next morning that it was missing, he was furious. He waited until his regiment left the trenches for the village where they were billeted for a rest. He then bought a new flag, a reel of fine wire, and a small bell.

Once more, under cover of darkness, he went out into "No Man's Land." The Germans who thought the incident closed were none too vigilant, so he was able to affix the flag to the scarecrow. He attached the wire to the flag, and ran it down through the scarecrow's clothes to the ground. As he returned to his own trench, he unwound the reel, and on the end of the wire he placed the bell.

At dawn the Germans were angry to see that the flag had been replaced and prepared to steal it again. They made no attempt for two nights, as they hoped to catch the French off guard. The third night, one of them, chosen by lot, crawled out of the trenches and wriggled slowly along the ground. There was no moon, and the man was careful to make no sound to warn the French; but as soon as he put his hand up and grasped the flag, the

French opened fire, and forced him to scamper back to cover in his own lines. Time after time, selecting always nights when they thought they could not be seen, the Germans tried to get the flag. Finally, after two of them had been badly wounded in the attempt, they abandoned all hope of capturing it. They could not understand how it was the French always knew when they touched it, and started to shoot at them. They did not know that each time they pulled the flag they dragged the wire, thus ringing the small bell hanging on the end of it which Gustave had attached to a stick thrust into the side of his trench.

The flag remained unfurled, while the enemy felt that they were being continually flouted and laughed at by the French soldiers.

This daring feat made Gustave even more popular with the regiment, but when he wrote in great glee to tell his mother of the episode, she sent him a letter scolding him, and reminding him of his promise not to shirk in an attack, but at the same time not to give his life for the pleasure of annoying the Germans or amusing his comrades.

For more than three weeks she received no

news from him. Anxiously she passed among her neighbours, who tried to console her by pointing out the difficulties of delivering mail from the front. Yet they all felt that something must have happened to Gustave as he had been such a faithful correspondent, knowing how much his mother worried for his safety. At last a letter came for her in a strange handwriting. She kept it in her hand for some time afraid to open it. When she felt she had the courage, she unsealed the envelope, and found that it was from the administrator of the Scottish Women's Hospital at the Abbaye de Royaumont. The administrator told her that Gustave had been brought in severely wounded, had been operated on, but was now well enough to have visitors. The letter assured her that her son was gaining ground daily and asked her to come to see him as soon as she could. She did not wait to consult her friends or she might have found out that the French Government would have been glad to give her free transportation to the nearest point to the hospital. She left at once on foot, begging shelter at night as she passed through the villages. The hospital was only forty miles away, but

it was a long walk for an old woman, and she was tired and weary, though unbroken in spirit, by the time she reached Royaumont. The nurses wanted to give her food before she saw her son, but she demanded to be taken to him immediately. It was only when she heard that his wounds were being dressed that she consented to drink a cup of coffee. The nurses told her that she need not fear for him for he would certainly recover, and they laughed as they told her some of his antics while in the hospital.

Only the day before he had managed to arrange a race between the one-legged men, who hopped around on their crutches, while he sat up in his bed to judge the competition. He was severely reprimanded by his tall Scotch nurse for some of the men were really not strong enough to be playing that way. Next day, when he was allowed to get out of bed, Gustave followed the nurse, trailing a chair behind him. When he had the opportunity, he climbed on the chair, and put his arms around the nurse's neck while he asked forgiveness.

"Nurse Margaret is so tall, it was the only way I could reach her," he explained, as he

was ordered to get under his blankets for fear he should overtax his strength. It was impossible not to forgive him for his pranks. The nurses were willing to make him many concessions—after all, it is hard always to behave like a man when you are only seventeen years old.

His mother beamed with pleasure to think that he was so much liked, but all the time the members of the staff were talking to her she sat with her eyes fixed on the door waiting for it to open and hoping for the permission to be given her to go to her son.

At last one of the doctors came in and told her the lad was ready to see her. She was so blinded by her tears that one of the assistants had to take her by the hand, and lead her to Gustave's bedside. He had passed his time in the hospital informing the other men what he would do to the enemy, the tricks he would play on them, the trenches he would capture, when he was well again; but as soon as he saw his mother, he forgot that he was a blood-thirsty warrior, and, lying quietly in her arms, stroking her face—the soldier disappeared, leaving only the son.

The wounded men crept gently into corners

and watched the reunion of the mother and her boy. Some of them slipped away to call their comrades from the other wards. The lad had talked so much of his mother, they all wanted to see her. They rolled their cigarettes in silence, anxious that no sound should make her feel that any one was watching. The sun was setting, but one beam of light from the stained-glass windows lingered on the boy's bed as if it hated to vanish and let darkness hide the lovelight in his eyes.

When the ward was dim, the nurses told Madame Daret she must leave, but before she went to the room which had been prepared for her, the head doctor sent word that she wished to see her. The mother feared there might be bad news for her but she was comforted when she saw the doctor's smiling face.

"In the usual way," said Dr. Ivens, "we should not allow you to visit your boy again to-morrow because the excitement of being with you might tire him too much, and prevent his progress toward complete recovery. But there is a surprise in store for him and I know his happiness would be spoiled if you were not present. We have received word that one of the French generals is coming to decorate

some of the soldiers and your son is to receive a medal for his courage in saving the life of his officer."

"Please tell me about it!" cried his mother.

"I could tell you the tale if I wished," answered the doctor, "but it is much better you should hear it to-morrow when his citation is read out before his comrades."

All was bustle and excitement early next morning during the preparations for the reception of the General and his staff. Gustave and his comrades who were to receive medals were moved carefully into the largest ward, while all the men who were well enough were allowed to gather around.

A chair was placed beside Gustave for Madame Daret. He was too agitated to speak much; all he could do was to lie still and press his mother's hand.

"I cannot think why I should receive a medal, mother," he said. "I did not do more than any one else. Really, I shall be ashamed to wear it, since all my chums deserve it as much as I do."

The general arrived at ten o'clock. As he passed through the wards and corridors of the hospital he addressed a kindly word of

encouragement or sympathy to each of the men.

Gustave was the last to be decorated. He sat up in his bed, his mother supporting him with her arm. The general pinned the Military Medal on his breast, then turning to the soldiers, said:

“My men, I have not yet read aloud the citation of Gustave Daret. Naturally, when a soldier is mentioned in the orders of the day, only a brief reference can be made to what he has actually done. I am glad to have an opportunity of telling you more about this boy, who of his own free will, with the permission of his patriotic mother, joined the army two years before he would have been called to the colours.

“He showed such eagerness to learn and trained so quickly that within three months he was considered fit to take his place beside you in the trenches. I wonder how many of you have heard of his remark to a comrade a short time after they had taken part in an attack. For days they had been cut off from the world, so that they were overjoyed, when they returned behind the lines to rest, to find heaps of letters and parcels waiting for them.

One of the men, who always had packets of good things to eat from his family, seized the bundle addressed to him and tore it open. His face was a study when he saw the contents. By mistake his mother had sent him a parcel which was intended for a home for old ladies, and it contained nothing but knitting needles and white cotton nightcaps. The soldier commenced to grumble, but Gustave, who was standing near, patted him on the shoulder and said:

“‘I can’t see why you are making such a fuss. That is a most useful present.’

“‘Useful!’ replied the soldier. ‘What can I do with knitting needles and nightcaps?’

“‘Why, man,’ answered Gustave, ‘you were complaining only the other day in the trench, that you had nothing on which to hang up your things. You can stick the knitting needles in the soft sides of the trench and put anything you like on them. As for the cotton nightcaps, you will be the most popular man in the regiment—we haven’t seen a coffee strainer for months and months and months!’”

All the soldiers laughed, while the general added, “I have just told you that tale so that you might know that Gustave always made

the best of things, and refused to shoulder unnecessary trouble. It is not for his cheerful spirit, however, that I am here to decorate him. A child at heart, he has shown the bravery of a man. On the 29th of March the Germans attacked, their advance covered by a heavy barrage from their guns. The French officer, realizing that his men would be killed by the shells if they remained in their trenches, ordered a counter-attack. The enemy was forced to retire, but kept up a constant firing with their rifles. When the French got back to their own trenches, the captain was lying face down in 'No Man's Land.' He had been shot in the shoulder and the leg while following his men back to their lines. Although bleeding from wounds in his chest and his arm, Gustave sprang over the top of the trench. His comrades tried to pull him down, but he called to them:

“‘I am going out for the captain. If he is dead, I mean to turn his body round. I know he would not rest unless he were lying face to the enemy. If he is living I am going to bring him in.’

“No one stopped him.

“‘If you fail, Gustave,’ they said, ‘one of us

will go after you, to drag both of you to safety.'

"Though every movement pained him, and bullets whistled near him, Gustave crawled over the rough ground until he reached the officer's side.

"'You must be mad to come out here. Go back at once,' commanded the captain.

"Gustave paid no attention to this, but, dragging the captain along with his one good arm, he moved, inch by inch, back toward the French lines.

"The French soldiers let loose a mighty cheer as Gustave came near enough to the trenches for them to stretch out their arms and draw him and the captain down to safety. The captain had fainted, but when he recovered he reported the incident to the commanding officer.

"I think you will agree with me, my friends, that no one has a better right than this boy of seventeen to carry on his tunic the Military Medal of France. Let us hope he may live long to wear it."

The old Abbaye echoed and reëchoed with the shouts of the men, as the general shook hands, first with Gustave, who was blushing

and hiding his head on his mother's shoulder, and then with Madame Daret.

When the ceremony was over and the general had left, the men were all sent back to their beds, while Gustave and his mother sat talking together.

One of the nurses passing by, not realizing the spirit of France, asked Madame Daret:

“Would you not be almost glad if Gustave had been so badly wounded that you could take him home with you and keep him there?”

The old peasant woman's face flushed with anger.

“How can you say such a thing, Mademoiselle? If all the mothers, wives, and sweethearts thought like you, who would defend the country? Gustave knows how proud I am of him, how much I love him, yet I have only one wish—he must get well as quickly as he can and return to the trenches to fight for France.”

RENÉ CHAUTIER



“With his cook’s knife he cut the braces holding the man’s equipment to his shoulders, ripped up his coat and shirt, dabbed the man’s wound with iodine, and bandaged him as well as he could.”

RENÉ CHAUTIER

THE sheep could not wander far if they tried—if one of them strayed away any distance, the great shaggy dog would follow him and chase him back to the others. Besides, they seemed to think that it was wise to stay near the dark, brown-skinned boy who in the morning brought them out to graze and at night herded them into a place of safety. The little shepherd understood the habits of his “children” as he called them, knowing that there was no harm in his sleeping a while, especially with his four-footed lieutenant, “Rough,” to keep watch should any of the sheep exhibit a sudden desire to explore some far-distant spot. He stretched himself on a bed of brilliantly coloured autumn leaves which he had gathered together, and with his head resting on his arms, looked out over the landscape.

“Rough,” he said to his dog, “come here and lie by me. Look at the country spread out

before us. I do not wonder that the men who have had to join the army were sorry to leave so beautiful a place, nor am I surprised that Sergeant Pirot said last night that 'it was worth while fighting for such a fair land' If I were taller and older I should be a soldier, too."

Rough wagged his tail in answer, and, noticing a sheep rambling off in the wrong direction, rushed after him barking and nipping at his heels until he rejoined the others. When he came back to his little master, he found him sleeping peacefully, so he lay down beside him, on guard, until he awoke.

Suddenly he pricked up his ears. Someone was approaching hastily yet stealthily through the little wood bordering the field. He crouched, ready to spring on the newcomer, but ran forward to greet him when he saw that it was only one of the boys whom he knew quite well. Rough licked his hands and jumped around him to show that he was quite friendly, for the lad seemed frightened and excited. He pushed the dog to one side, and shook René Chautier by the shoulders to awaken him. Chautier rubbed his eyes, then stretched his arms.

"What is the hurry, stupid?" he said.

“Didn’t you see I was enjoying myself? You have spoiled a wonderful dream. I thought I had ten pounds of chocolate and no one to share it with me. I had only commenced to eat the first pound when you woke me, so really you have stolen nine pounds of chocolate from me.”

His chum did not laugh at the joke but stood terrified and panting.

“Have you come to fetch me? Is there a fire in the village, or has something awful happened?”

“Everyone has fled, there is not a soul left,” Jean managed to gasp as he regained breath after his long run. “The Germans are within two miles—they may arrive at any minute.”

“Well, what if they do? I don’t see why the people have all rushed away. Has my master gone, too?”

“Yes, indeed. Farmer Mazard was one of the first to fly with his two girls. Don’t you realize that the tales we have heard are true and that the enemy burn the villages through which they pass? No one’s life is safe. Hurry up, René, call Rough, and come along. You haven’t a minute to lose. Mother would hardly give me permission to warn you, but

I told her I knew just where to find you and would not stop a moment. Pick up your stick, we can take a short cut and join all the others on the main road."

"It was good of you to come, Jean," replied René. "Now get back to your mother as quickly as your legs will carry you. I must stay here. I can't leave these sheep."

"But the Germans will kill you when they see you."

"Oh, no, they won't. They will not bother about me. They will only pillage the cottages, perhaps set fire to them, and then pass on to capture the next village. Luckily, I have some bread and I can get water from the brook, so I can sleep up here to-night where no one will find me."

"Please come on. Don't stay behind," pleaded Jean.

"You are just losing time trying to argue with me. But take Rough with you—he may bark and let them know where I am," answered René.

Rough refused to follow Jean so René cut a piece of the rope which he always carried in case any of the sheep should prove troublesome, and tying it to the dog's collar, handed

the other end to his friend. Rough, realizing that his master wished him to go, allowed Jean to lead him away, although he looked back often, pleading with his eyes to be permitted to stay.

René felt very lonely without his dog. Perhaps he was not quite so brave as he had tried to make Jean believe. For a time he felt inclined to take to his heels and follow his friends, but he kept on repeating to himself, "My master gave the sheep into my care. He has taken his girls away leaving me in charge of his property—my duty is to remain where I am. Here I must stay."

He was wrong when he thought that the enemy would be too busily occupied to discover him. They had been advancing rapidly. For several days they had been out of touch with their provision base and they were feeding themselves on anything they could find in the deserted villages. A party of men was detailed to scour the country, and round up all the cattle and sheep they could find for the use of the invading army. It was not long before they detected René.

"Are those sheep yours?" one of them asked.

"No," replied René, "I am only the shepherd. They belong to Farmer Mazard."

"You must let us have them. We will give you a paper saying that they have been requisitioned, and when the foolish French have stopped fighting and have recognized us as the rulers of France, your master can take the paper and in exchange receive payment for the animals in good German money."

"You will never conquer France and I have no confidence in your promises," said René. "Besides, I can't sell the sheep. They do not belong to me."

"Don't talk so much. Remember you are dealing with hungry men. We have already been too patient with you," answered the soldier. "Sell us the sheep—besides the note for your master, I promise you a golden louis for yourself. I bet you have never had as much money as that in your life. Now come along, don't be stupid. Help us to drive the animals to our camp."

"I won't sell them. I won't do anything you wish," shouted René, lifting his stick as he prepared to fight in defence of his flock. The angry soldiers sprang upon the child, bound him to a tree, and beat him with their rifles

until he was insensible. One of them, less brutal than the rest, untied the cords.

Just at that moment shots rang out from the village below. "Franzosen! Franzosen!" cried the sentinel they had placed at some distance to keep a look-out. Without further thought of the sheep, and leaving the child's body on the ground, they scampered away to join their comrades who were in retreat, the French having counter-attacked and recaptured the village.

René recovered consciousness late that night. His body ached all over and when he tried to rise, he found that his left leg was useless. It had been broken by one of the blows that had been showered upon him. Weak from pain and hunger, his throat burning with thirst, he tried to drag himself toward the brook, but he had not gone many yards before he fainted.

He would have died from exposure were it not that his faithful friend had not forgotten him. Rough had followed Jean meekly, watching for a chance to escape. The boy's mother had asked him to help her pile up some packages that had fallen from the handcart she was pushing before her. Jean tied Rough, as

he thought, securely to a tree, but the dog, tugging at the cord, loosened it, and dashed away before any one could stop him.

With the unerring instinct of animals he ran across country until he came to the side of his master. He howled dismally when the child refused to answer his bark of welcome. He licked his face with his warm tongue, and tried in his dog language to say, "I am beside you, I, Rough, your dog. Notice me, pat me, speak to me." Still the boy showed no signs of life.

Down to the village went Rough. Most of the men were sleeping, but he caught hold of the end of the trousers' leg of one of the sentinels, shaking it violently. The man kicked him to get rid of him, but in a few minutes Rough was back again barking, without making any attempt to bite him.

"The poor beast is hungry," said a soldier standing near who had been awakened by the noise. He tossed the dog a piece of meat and bread but Rough refused to touch it, and persisted in tugging at the man's clothing.

"Something funny about that dog," continued the soldier. "You know we use them up at the front for finding the wounded. I wonder if he wants to show us anything."

"I can't leave my post," replied the sentinel. "You are free. Go with him and see what he wants. If any one asks for you, I will tell them what you are doing."

Rough seemed to understand that he had found a friend. He trotted along in front, only looking back from time to time to be sure that the man was following him, until they reached the child's body. The soldier bent down, flashed his torch in René's face, felt that his heart was still beating, and lifting him in his arms, carried him back to the regimental surgeon.

The soldiers were surprised because as soon as he saw the lad safe, the dog ran away although they tried to keep him with them. Next morning they found that he had returned to the field to gather the sheep together and had chased them back to the pen. One of the soldiers was detailed to watch them. It was only when he saw them properly guarded that Rough consented to leave them and join his young master.

The doctor bathed the child's bruises and put his leg in splints. When René came to, he found himself surrounded by people with kindly faces, everyone eager to do something

to soothe his pain. The reaction was so great that he started to cry. His first question was, "Are my sheep safe?"

"Yes," answered the doctor. "Of course we do not know how many there should be in your flock but we believe they are all at the farm. After your dog had saved your life, he went back to complete his task by driving the sheep home."

"Good dog, dear Rough," murmured René.

Rough heard the beloved voice mention his name, and in spite of being tired out, got up from the floor where he was lying, placed his two paws on the bed, and bent his head for his little master to pat him.

The regiment was only resting for a few hours; having orders to advance immediately, and next morning René was placed in one of the Red Cross ambulances to be sent behind the lines for treatment. Rough ran alongside until the ambulance driver, knowing his story, saw that he was lagging behind, and let him jump into the car, so that the dog and the boy arrived at the hospital together.

René was thoroughly spoiled by all the nurses—they even allowed Rough to come in every day to see him. One morning he arrived

in a state of great excitement. The nurses endeavoured to push him away, but he reached his master, and laid on his bed a small jack-rabbit which he had caught in the fields. René stroked him, saying, "If I were up and well, I would boil the rabbit and you would have all the bones to pick. You do not know, nurse," he added, turning to the girl who was standing beside him, "how well I can cook. At night when the sheep were all safely back at the farm I often cooked the supper for the family. The farmer's two daughters taught me how to do it and were always pleased to see me in the kitchen. They worked so hard that they were glad for a chance to rest after the day's labours, while, just between ourselves, I spent most of my time in the fields asleep, Rough watching the flock for me. It did not hurt me to do a little work at night."

"I am sure you are quite a chef. When you are well enough you shall go into the hospital kitchen and show us what you can do," answered the nurse.

As soon as René was permitted to move around, he reminded the nurse of her promise. He was allowed to pass a short time each day in the kitchen, where he surprised the staff

with his knowledge of cooking. The work was new to him. Before, he had only prepared the food for the family and the farm labourers, but he was not long in learning to cook for the two hundred patients and the staff of the hospital.

During his illness and convalescence the men of the regiment who had saved him, wrote him regularly, while he sent them news of his progress. The regiment, having taken part in a number of important engagements, at the time René was well enough to leave the hospital, had been sent behind the lines to rest and be reëquipped at a village not far from the hospital. René obtained permission to go to thank them for all they had done for him. The nurses packed his knapsack full of new clothes and food, so that he started out in good spirits, Rough following at his heels.

The men were delighted to see him and had prepared quite a feast of welcome. They had even put a large meaty bone on one side for Rough for they knew that the boy would not come alone. They had many tales to tell him of their adventures, while René boasted of his prowess as a cook. To amuse him, the men permitted him to cook for them. There

was no prouder boy in France than René working in the white cap and apron which his soldier friends had given him.

The days passed all too quickly. The men knew that at any time they might be ordered again to the front. As the child passed among them they watched him with their eyes—they all hated the idea of leaving him behind.

Finally, a deputation of the men waited on one of the officers, asking him to intercede with the colonel and get permission for René Chautier to go forward with them. The captain pleaded with the colonel who absolutely refused to entertain the idea.

“What should we do with the lad?” he said. “He would only be a useless mouth to feed and get into mischief.”

“He would not be useless,” answered the captain. “He is a splendid cook and has been helping the men all the time he has been here with us.”

“But his people would not wish him to go into danger.”

“He has no relatives. His father and mother died when he was a baby. For years he has been earning his keep by working as a shepherd for one of the farmers near here.”

"I quite believe he is a good lad," replied the colonel, "but I have no right to accept the services of a boy—there are no children with the French Army."

"You are wrong, colonel. Numbers of children have not only marched with the regiments, but have actually taken part in the fighting," answered the captain.

"Bring me proofs of boys as young, or younger, than this lad, having been accepted by other regiments and I will give him permission to stay," said the colonel. "Meantime, he may remain here, but he must understand that he is to go when I issue the order."

The captain set to work to gather the necessary information. Four days later he came before his commanding officer, a large bundle of notes in his hand.

"Here are the facts for which you asked, colonel. Everyone of the tales is authentic."

"Read them out to me," replied the colonel, as he settled back in his chair to listen.

"I will commence with some of the youngest:

"*Marcel Vermier* was born in Montbeliard. He followed one of the regiments and fought in the Vosges. He was always to be found where the danger was greatest and was wounded finally at La Bassée when

he was helping to carry ammunition up to one of the batteries. His conduct on the field of battle caused him to be named corporal at the age of thirteen and a half.

“Only fourteen years old *Louis Arboud* managed to save 13 men who were lying wounded under enemy fire. He was attached to the 3rd Infantry.

“Another boy of fourteen, *Ferdinand Colm*, was found in a deserted village dying of hunger, by the 92nd Territorials. The regiment adopted him and he is still with them.

“*Albert Schuffrenkes* was also only fourteen years old when he managed to capture four horses belonging to the Germans, and bring them to the French camp. At that time France was very short of horses, so that he received many congratulations on his courage and was adopted by one of the regiments.”

“*Maurice Claude* of Domevre, fifteen years old, was wounded. The hospital in which he was lying was captured by the Germans. The German colonel while on a tour of inspection stood by the lad’s bedside, asking, ‘How are you to-day, my boy? Is your wound less painful?’ The lad was dying, but opening his eyes, and seeing the pointed helmet and knowing that he was in the presence of the enemy, answered proudly,

“‘I am not in pain at all. One does not suffer when one dies for one’s country. Long live France!’

“The German colonel turned to his aide, saying, “‘We shall never subdue a people which produces such children.’

“*Jean Chotin*, aged fifteen, already has the Military

Medal. He managed to attach himself to the 92nd Infantry as they were passing through his village. He carried out a plan which he had evolved out of his own head, capturing two Germans from whom the commanding French officer was able to extract information which made the attack next day a complete success.

"*Joseph Lanzonne* was a little older. He enlisted without confessing that he was only sixteen years old. At Montfaucon (Meuse) he distinguished himself by saving his captain from falling into the hands of the enemy and carrying him over a kilometre under fire to safety. He was named corporal and would certainly have soon been a sergeant had it not been that his parents discovered his whereabouts, and to his great disgust insisted on his returning home.

"*Jean Mercadier* enlisted when he was sixteen and a half years old in the 59th Infantry as it passed by Adamville. He found that the regiment was to remain garrisoned for some time in a fort behind the lines, so he arranged to be transferred to the 2nd Heavy Artillery. One night when on guard he saw a party of Germans creep up behind an officer, preparing to capture him. He fired on them, and dashing forward gave the captain his bayonet, while with his clasp knife he fought the enemy hand to hand. He was wounded slightly, but reported next day for duty. He was again wounded and while in the hospital received the Military Medal for his courageous defence of his officer. He was raised to the rank of corporal.

"*Gustave Chatain* was another child hero. Accompanying one of the regiments, he spent a long time on the

firing line. He loved to go out on scouting expeditions, and was always ready to volunteer for that kind of work. After an attack the Germans apparently evacuated a village. The French were anxious to find out whether the enemy had really gone before their troops were allowed to enter. They feared that possibly the withdrawal was only a trick to lure them into an ambush. Gustave was deputed to try to inspect the territory and report to the commanding officer. Cautiously he crept into the village which seemed deserted. One by one he entered the cottages and barns and looked into the cellars until he came to an old house. Up a ladder he climbed, and to his great surprise found several Germans asleep on the straw in the loft. Taking one of the men's own guns, he fired into the air. The Germans jumped up, and tried to reach their rifles, but Gustave covered them with his gun, threatening to shoot the first one who disobeyed his orders. They put up their hands, and, one by one, he made them go down the ladder, marching them back as prisoners to the French lines. After he had made his report to the general that he had captured the only Germans left in the village the order was given for the French troops to go forward. The general was so pleased with Gustave that he kept him to dine with him, and recommended him for a decoration."

"Stop," said the colonel. "Go back to your men and tell them they have my permission to keep René with them."

There was great rejoicing among the soldiers

when the captain told them that the colonel was willing to grant their request. René, himself, had to be reprimanded for making so much noise. He ran through the village shouting and jumping for joy, with Rough following, barking his loudest. Next day he asked whether he would be allowed to carry a gun.

“No,” answered the captain. “You are too young. You must stick to your job as a cook. When we are at the front you shall be a stretcher-bearer, and help with the wounded.”

“But how will the people in the villages we pass through know that I belong to the regiment?”

“I will arrange that for you. You have quite a large head for a boy your size. I will give you one of my old caps with the number of your regiment embroidered on the front of it. Wear it above the cook’s clothes you now have and everyone will say, ‘There goes the regimental cook, a most important person. No one can do without him.’”

René started work the next day. As a special favour he asked to be allowed to cook the colonel’s dinner. After he had

served up an excellent soup, a roast chicken, and a dish of apricots, the colonel sent for him.

“You have shown us what a fine little chef you are. Now, come and drink coffee with us. I am glad I listened to the captain and did not send you away.”

With his pots hanging around him, his white clothes nearly always a dark gray with dust, the lad marched with the soldiers. The men marvelled that he did not tire. Even after a fifteen- or twenty-mile walk, he was ready as soon as they stopped to set up his kitchen and start business. They always found him singing the songs he had learned from them as he scrubbed his pots free of dust and got the hot soup ready. He seemed to know by instinct the men who were most tired and fed them first.

The night before they were to enter the danger zone the colonel sent for René, and told him that he had served the regiment well and that no one would think him a coward if he preferred to stay behind and wait for them to come out of the trenches.

René was indignant.

“Why, the men will need hot food more than ever when they are standing in the rain

and slime for hours. A good soup will cheer them up," he said. "Besides, the captain promised me that although I should not be allowed to fight, I would be enrolled as a stretcher-bearer. Please let me go."

"I have no intention of sending you away, Chautier," replied the colonel, "but I wanted to feel that I had given you a chance to avoid risking your life. If you wish to remain with us through thick and thin, God bless you, boy, and bring you safely out of the attack."

The soldiers affixed a Red Cross armlet to his cook's uniform, and instructed René how to lift a wounded man into the stretcher and how to help carry it so as to jolt him as little as possible. He was told to report to the chaplain, and take his orders from him.

During the attack one of the sergeants fell, struck in the shoulder. Without noticing the bullets whistling around him, René knelt by his side. With his cook's knife he cut the braces holding the man's equipment to his shoulders, ripped up his coat and shirt, dabbed his wound with iodine, and bandaged it as well as he could.

It was too risky for them to try to move, so René said:

“We had better stay here until dusk. I’ll stay with you, and if no one comes, I will sleep beside you.”

Later the stretcher-bearers came and carried the man back to the dressing station.

René was now free. He found the chaplain and offered to go out with him into “No Man’s Land” to look for the wounded. That night alone he helped bring in forty men.

Cook behind the lines, stretcher-bearer at the front, René lived with the regiment for more than two years. At the end of that time the colonel sent for him. Placing his hand on the boy’s shoulders, he said to him:

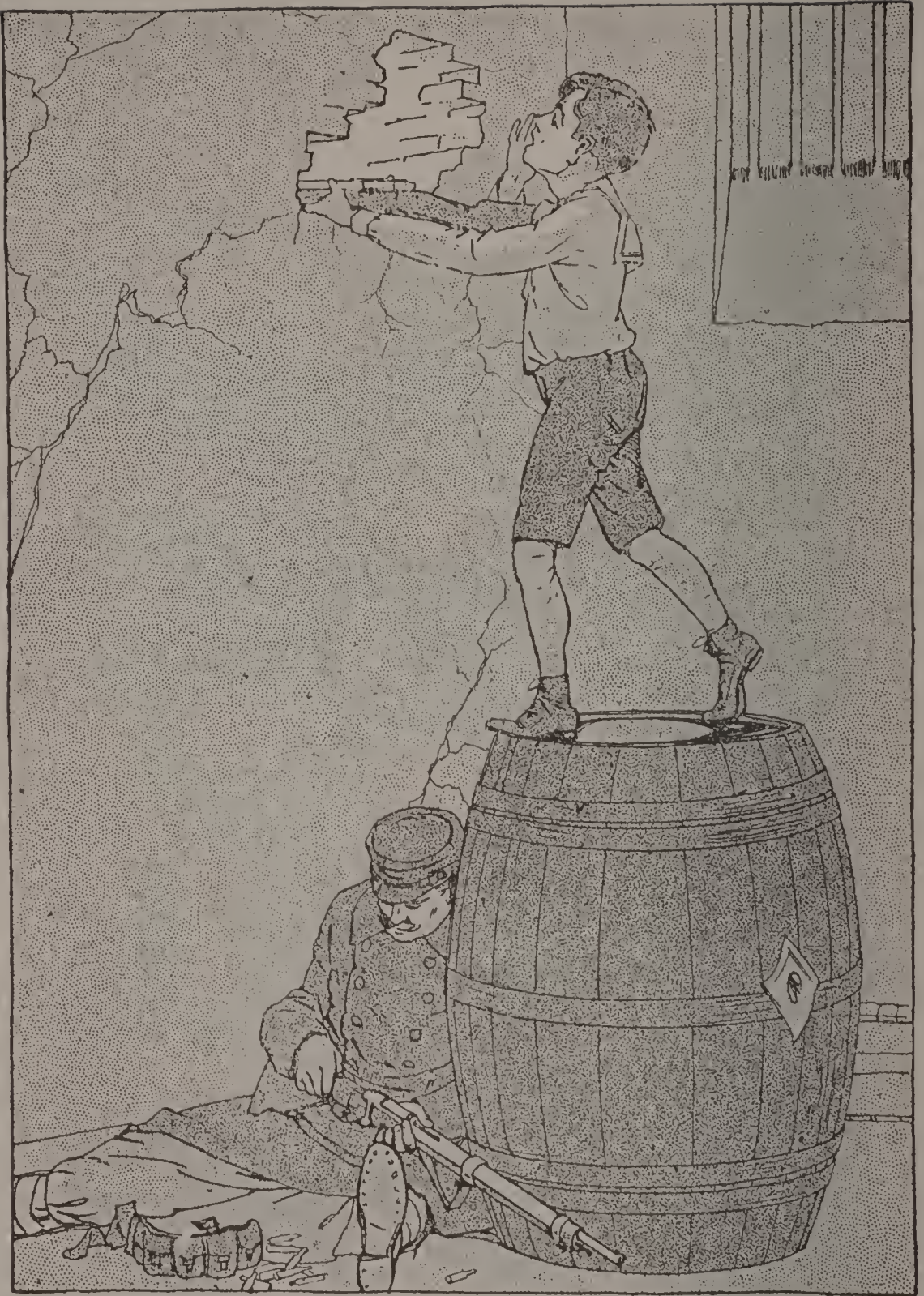
“Sometime ago I should have called you a ‘little man’; now, I greet you as a soldier of France. You are old enough to take your place with the men in the trenches and to wear our uniform.

“You have served a long and painful apprenticeship, and I have watched your untiring, careful work. I could have delegated your captain to give you the good news, but I wanted to give myself the pleasure of handing your rifle to you. Here it is. Take it. If you fight as well for your country as you have

cooked for your regiment you will be a general some day."

René stayed with the regiment until he was slightly wounded about a month before the signing of the armistice. He kept Rough always with him, and when the nurses were sewing his service stripes on his uniform, he insisted that they put the same number on the cloth coat he had made for Rough to keep his four-footed friend warm as he watched beside him during the long, cold nights he was on duty as a sentinel.

*ÉTIENNE CHEVRILLE—THE BOY
SHARPSHOOTER*



“Étienne climbed up onto the barrel, placed his rifle in position, and shouted at the top of his lungs, ‘Long Live France!’”

*ÉTIENNE CHEVRILLE—THE BOY
SHARPSHOOTER*

UP, LAZYBONES, do you think the birds will wait for you? The sun is already high in the heavens and I have been downstairs an hour or more." Étienne turned his head on his pillow, yawned, and looked up at his father sleepily.

"Come along. Jump out of bed, and hurry into your clothes! I have your coffee and bread ready on the table for you. If you are not at breakfast in ten minutes I shall leave you behind and go hunting alone," said his father.

This last threat roused the boy. He started to dress at once, and was soon busy eating as much as he could to prepare himself for the long tramp over the hills, while his father packed food in their knapsacks so that they could eat, and even, if necessary, sleep out in the open.

Étienne's mother had died when he was born, leaving the child as the only consolation

to the man who had loved her so dearly. The boy grew up, his father's inseparable companion. They were great pals, and, as soon as he was old enough to carry a gun, his father took him on hunting expeditions twice or three times a week.

Under his tuition Étienne became an expert shot while still quite young. Not only did he seldom fail to bring down a bird, but also, when the village held its annual fête, he always took the first prize for marksmanship, even in open competition with the men. Monsieur Chevrille was never tired of boasting to his friends of his son's prowess, and made the boy practise on every possible occasion.

"It is fine to be a good shot," he told him. "It amuses you now to hunt with me and to be able to bring in game as presents for the neighbours, but what is more important is that when you come to serve your time in the army you will have one thing less to learn and you may even be able to win prizes for your regiment."

"It is not often that the things we like to do are good for us," replied Étienne. "Anyway, I'm glad I know how to shoot."

When the time came for him to help defend France, Étienne's father kissed his son good-bye, begged him to be obedient, and to give as little trouble as possible to the family in whose care he was leaving him.

Étienne pleaded hard with his father to be allowed to fight. He pointed out that he could shoot as well as any man, and that he, too, should be permitted to join the army opposing the invaders. When his father made him realize that he could not accompany him to war, and that no regiment would accept a thirteen-year-old boy, he promised that he would be a worthy son of France by doing the best he could at home. His father added:

"You can help the women and the other children with the crops. The harvest will soon be ready and with so many men absent, you can take your place in the fields. After the long walks you have had with me, your muscles should be hardened, so that you can work longer than the other boys without feeling tired."

"Good!" answered Étienne. "You can depend on me, father. I will not shirk."

"You must also use your strength to defend the women and children if the occasion should

arise. You must always think of others first and yourself last. You will discover, my boy, that in serving others you will find your own happiness, and that self-indulgence only leads to misery. I am telling you this now because it is a solemn moment for us both. I hope I may come back to you, but if I am killed on the battlefield, I should like to feel that my little son will grow up to be a real man."

Étienne tried to keep back his tears and answered, "I will, father, I will!"

They embraced once more, the father stopping for a few minutes with his hand on the lad's head to bless him before he joined the rest of the men as they marched away singing and promising the villagers who remained behind that the enemy should never conquer France.

Less than ten days after his father had gone the news was brought through that the enemy was advancing rapidly toward the village. Without thought of the sleeping boy confided to their care, the family with whom Étienne was staying left in the night with the other villagers, so that Étienne awoke next morning to find himself alone.

The roar of the cannons sounding nearer and nearer, he took refuge in an old hay loft. For two days and two nights he remained concealed, while through a small peephole he witnessed many desperate hand-to-hand fights between the French and the Germans. Time after time the French recaptured the village but were unable to hold it, owing to heavy German bombardment. Finally, they were obliged to retire, leaving their fallen comrades behind them.

As Étienne's throat was parched with thirst and he was tortured by hunger, he decided to climb down from his hiding-place to go in search of food, even though he risked death from a stray shot. He felt he would rather die in the open than like a rat hidden in the garret.

Choosing a time when the enemy was not shelling the village, he crept down from his hiding-place. Fearing capture, he stood for some time behind a door, watching to be sure that there were no Germans left in any of the houses. When he was satisfied that the village was entirely deserted, he moved warily from place to place, stooping behind the walls of the houses ruined by shell fire, trying never

to expose himself at any point where he might come under enemy observation. He could hear their airplanes passing overhead and knew that with their long-distance glasses they could see any movement in the village.

The main street was strewn with the bodies of the soldiers who had been left as dead by their comrades. As Étienne passed among them reverently, his heart full of grief for the brave men who had fallen, he was surprised to hear a low moan. He crawled cautiously to the side of the man from whom the sound seemed to come, and found that, severely wounded in the leg, he had fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood.

Thinking no longer of his own safety, Étienne ran to a brook near by, filled his cap with water, and, kneeling by the soldier, loosened his collar and bathed his face and head. Opening his eyes and seeing only a child with him, the soldier tried to rise, but fell back groaning. His leg was far too badly shattered to allow him to stand.

“Don’t try to move,” said Étienne.

Just at that moment the enemy again opened fire. Shell after shell shrieked through the air, striking the houses all about them.

Roofs crashed down and the walls tumbled forward into the street.

“What an awful bombardment! It is the worst I have been under since I went to war. The enemy must think our men are still here,” said the soldier. “Get under cover and save yourself, child. I am already useless, and can never fight again. You must try to escape for, when you are older, France will need you.”

“When I leave, you will go with me,” answered Étienne.

Although really frightened, he stayed by the side of the man until the enemy, deciding that there were no French troops in the village, ceased firing.

The soldier was deeply touched by the courage of his little comrade. Once more he tried to persuade the boy to escape while there was yet a chance of his reaching cover in safety. Étienne pretended to be angry with him, saying,

“You are only a soldier of France like myself. It is true I have not a uniform like you, but when I am old enough I shall have one. Meantime, I refuse to take orders from you. After all, you have only one leg, while I have

two; so it is for you to obey me and do just what I say. The enemy or our own men may open fire again at any time. It is certainly not safe to leave you lying out here. Therefore, I am going to take you down into the cellar of the nearest house as quickly as possible."

"But you cannot move me and I cannot walk."

"I can't lift you in my arms," said Étienne, "but I will fasten you to a plank, drag you across the ground, and let you down as gently as I can through the trap-door into the cellar."

He remembered that in the loft where he had been hiding he had seen just the kind of broad plank he required, and also some stout ropes. He fetched them, rolled the man's body onto the plank, attached him to it strongly with the cords, dragged him to the trap-door, and lowered him into the cellar.

The soldier suffered horribly from the rough handling, but he stifled his moans so that his little friend should not know how much he was enduring. Besides, he knew it was their only chance of living, and he was anxious to save the boy's life as well as his own.

Once in the cellar, Étienne unbound the man from the plank, and out of some straw piled up in a corner he made him a bed on which he could lie fairly comfortably. To his great delight he found food on the shelves, and a number of bottles of wine.

After Étienne fetched some water in a pail, bathed the man's wounds, and, with a piece of linen torn from his own shirt, improvised a rough bandage, he thought of himself for the first time.

He ate nearly a whole loaf of bread. Then laughing, said to the soldier,

"If I had done this at once, I should not have needed the plank. I should have been strong enough to carry you."

"You have already placed too heavy a burden on your shoulders, young friend, in trying to save a helpless man. Now that I am suffering less pain and am out of immediate danger, won't you go away? You can send someone to find me later on."

"Haven't I told you that when I leave, you will be with me? Have you no faith in me at all?" replied Étienne.

The soldier saw that he had hurt the boy's feelings, so he hastened to assure him: "In-

deed, I believe in your courage! You have already proved that."

Étienne sat by the soldier's side, and told him of his father and the happy days they had spent together. In the evening, when all seemed quiet without, the boy went on a scouting expedition. As darkness had fallen by this time, it appeared to him that he could go out in comparative safety.

When he told the soldier of his decision, the man urged him to go. He thought that, after all, the boy had tired of staying with him and meant to abandon him. Later he was sorry he had doubted him, for he came back, trailing two rifles behind him, and around his waist were several belts of cartridges which he had picked up in the street. Whispering, he said,

"We must be careful not to make any sound that might betray our presence. The Germans are back in the village. I have brought in guns so that we can defend ourselves."

"Did you see how many there were?"

"Yes, I think only four, but I am not quite sure. They are down in one of the cellars, sitting around a candle playing cards."

"Only four," said the soldier. "They must be scouts sent out to see if the village is

deserted so as to prevent their artillery wasting shells on the place if there are no troops here. I expect they are waiting for daylight as they fear to lose their way if they try to return to their own lines in the dark."

"There may be more of them," answered Étienne. "I thought I saw a group of men lying on the floor, but, as I could only look through a small slit in the trap-door of the cellar, which was very dimly lighted, I could not distinguish anything very clearly."

During the long hours of the night Étienne kept watch while the wounded Frenchman rested, but finally, worn out by fatigue, he fell asleep. The soldier awoke first and looked at the sleeping boy.

"Brave little man," he murmured. "Perhaps he is giving his life for me while I can do nothing to help him."

At daybreak Étienne announced that he would go out once more to see whether the Germans had left the village. Within a few minutes he was back, his face flushed with anger.

"I have seen the boches again, the same ones I watched last night," he reported. "There are four of them escorting twenty

French prisoners, their hands bound behind their backs, some of them with their wounds unbandaged, all of them pale and tired. The Germans have tied the ends of the ropes to their horses so that our men cannot escape."

Roused at the thought of the plight of the prisoners, the wounded soldier tried to rise, but fell back helpless on the straw.

"I cannot move my leg," he exclaimed. "It is awful to be so near and yet not be able to help my comrades!"

"Don't give up hope so easily," cried Étienne. "I have an idea of my own. All you need do is to load the guns for me and I will watch through a hole in the top of the cellar wall. I can reach it easily by standing on a barrel. There is also another hole through which I can put a rifle. I promise you the first boche who shows himself will get a punctured skin."

"But they may not pass this way," answered the man.

"Yes, they will, because I will attract their attention by calling them."

"Call them?" repeated the soldier.

"Yes, why not? You are not afraid of death if we fail, are you?"

“Certainly not.”

“Well, then, do what I ask. Load the rifles. I will do the rest.”

Étienne climbed up onto the barrel, placed his rifle in position, and shouted at the top of his lungs:

“Long live France!”

Thinking to capture yet another prisoner, the Germans turned their horses and started down the street in the direction from which the sound had come. As soon as they came into view, Étienne fired, and the first Uhlan fell from his horse. Before they had time to realize whence the firing came, a second shot rang out and another man dropped from the saddle.

Étienne had helped the wounded man drag himself near the barrel on which he was standing. The soldier loaded the rifles, while the boy rapidly discharged shot after shot so as to give the impression that a number of soldiers were in the village. The two remaining Germans, fearing that they had fallen into an ambush, dropped the ropes holding the prisoners and putting spurs to their horses fled, leaving the twenty Frenchmen behind them.

Out of his cellar came Étienne, triumphant, and began loosening the ropes binding the prisoners' hands. "The liberated men would not believe at first that they had been saved by a child, but finally realizing this to be true, they crowded around to congratulate and thank him.

"Thank me later," he said to the Frenchmen. "Before you think of me I have work for you to do. We have a wounded 'poilu' to save. Come down into the cellar and have some food. We will then take turns keeping watch until nightfall in case the Germans return."

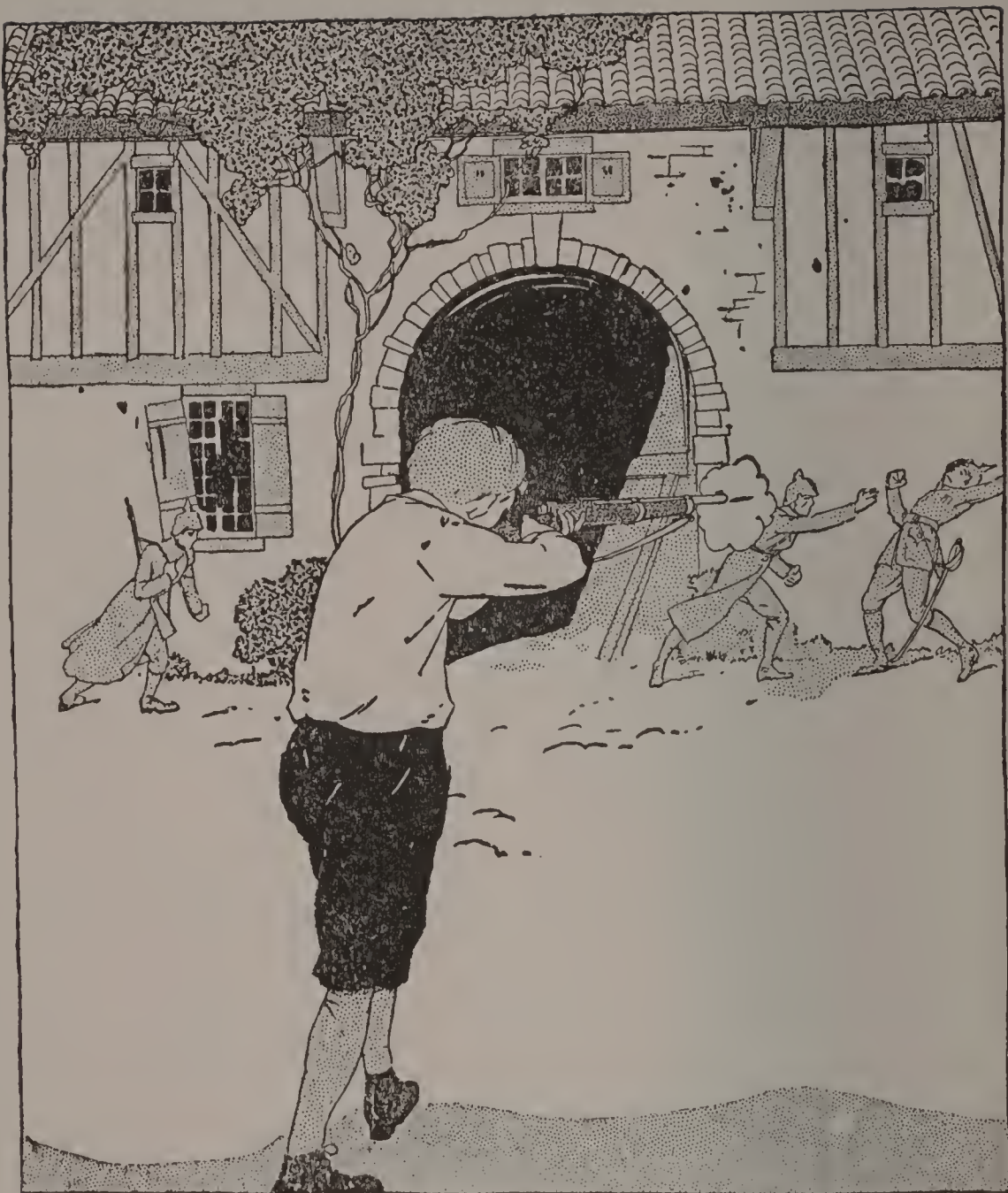
Each of the men secured a rifle from one of his fallen comrades, thus preparing to defend himself in case of an attack, but the enemy did not come back. Probably they were too busy in another quarter, or possibly they did not wish to admit to their comrades that they had run away from the French.

After they were well fed and rested the soldiers fetched a number of planks, and improvised a rough stretcher on which they placed the wounded man. When night came, guided by Étienne, who knew the country well, they started toward the French lines

carrying their comrade. They reached their destination safely, and Étienne was adopted by the regiment as a “poilu.”

Later, his father had him transferred to his own company, and, side by side, father and son fought for France.

EMILE DEPRES



"He seized the rifle, pretended to aim at the heart of the Frenchman, then rapidly turning on his heel, shot straight at the German officer, killing him instantly."

EMILE DEPRES

EMILE DEPRES lived with his widowed mother in one of the smallest cottages in the village of Louches, which is situated in the heart of the coal mining district of northern France.

He was a studious, quiet boy who progressed so well in school that early in June, 1914, the teacher, knowing that the family was in straitened circumstances, excused him from further attendance in class, telling him he need not return after the summer holidays.

"I am glad to give you your certificate," she said. "You can now commence at once to help your mother."

"Mother is so brave. She tries to keep me from seeing how tired she is," answered Emile, "but I know that she works too hard. You may rely on me, Mademoiselle. I will lose no time or opportunity to do my best to help her."

The boy was delighted to be free from school. For years he had watched his mother

growing more and more weary and old, striving to keep a roof over their heads and to clothe and feed them.

Without consulting her, Emile went to see the manager of one of the largest mines. The man, who knew the child by repute, was quite willing to allow him to begin work at once.

When Emile arrived home he said to his mother:

"I have good news for you. The teacher has given me my study certificate, and the manager of the mines is willing to take me as a pit-boy."

"Do you want to live underground and leave me alone all day?" asked his mother. "No, child, I shall not listen to any such proposal. You are far too young to work in the mines."

"But, mother, I am fourteen years old. Adrian, Joseph, and even Jean who is only thirteen, a year younger than myself, are already earning good wages. Please don't refuse me. You have slaved for years to look after me and bring me up. Now I want to do something for you."

"Later on, son, you can start to be a breadwinner. Two years from now I shall encour-

age you to work—I am the last person to want you to grow up a lazy good-for-nothing.”

“The manager of the mine told me this morning that they are short of men,” persisted the boy. “He would give me better pay now than at any future time.”

“Don’t be obstinate, Emile,” answered his mother. “I am still strong enough to provide food and shelter for you. Now go and play with the other children. Do not try to be a man before you are a boy. As for the high wages, as you grow older you will understand that money cannot buy health or happiness.”

Emile saw that he would gain nothing by arguing.

“Of course, mother,” he said, “I will do as you wish, but it does seem hard that you will not let me help you. I should be so glad to feel that I am no longer a burden to you.”

“You are never a burden. Did you ever hear me speak of you that way? Little Emile, dear son,” and his mother drew him down on her knee. Emile forgot he was fourteen—none of us is ever too old to like, sometimes, to be cuddled by those who love us.

A few weeks later the villagers heard of the declaration of war. Most of the men left

immediately to join the army. Many of them were exempted from military service as their work in the mines was as necessary for the carrying on of the war as work in the trenches. There was, however, a grave shortage of labour and the government was anxious that the mines should produce coal as rapidly as possible. Emile again approached his mother for permission to accept the job offered him before. This time she could not refuse, for she knew that France needed every one of her sons and daughters to fight or toil for her.

It was a proud and happy day for the boy when he brought home his first earnings to the devoted mother who had struggled so long to do everything for him. He looked forward to the time when he would receive more money.

"Soon I shall earn higher wages, mother," he boasted. "Then there will be no need for you to work any more."

"You are helping me a great deal," she answered. "Since the outbreak of war food has risen so much in price that I do not know how we should live without your assistance. Only I beg you to take care of yourself."

There was a note of anxiety in her voice

as she talked to him. Her observant eyes had noticed that the boy looked pale and tired when he returned from work at night. She did all she could to look after him. Every morning she packed his dinner pail full of good, nourishing food and made him show her that he had clean, dry straw in his little wooden shoes. Naturally, the work underground was trying for a child accustomed to be out in the open air.

Emile had only been in the mine three weeks when the terrible news came through to the village that overwhelming forces of the enemy had defeated the French and their British Allies. It was impossible to save the northern provinces from invasion, and, with the deepest regret, the French High Command realized that the mines must fall into the hands of the Germans. The miners were drafted into the army, only a sufficient number of men being left behind to keep the pumps going, while they had instructions to flood the mines when the enemy arrived, so as not to leave them in working condition for the Germans. Believing that their youth would protect them, Emile with a few other boys was allowed to stay behind to look after the pit ponies.

The villagers who remained in their homes were soon cut off from communication with the rest of France, so that it was not long before they faced starvation. Emile and his mother lived on the produce of their garden, sharing all they could with their less-fortunate neighbours.

The boy was always bright and cheerful, but he had listened too often to old Jean Petaux telling tales of the war of 1870 not to understand the danger threatening them all. The old man had fought the Germans then, had been taken prisoner, and had escaped by jumping from a train in motion. He had described to Emile vividly the horror of those days and the sufferings of the French peasantry who had been unfortunate enough to be in the track of the victorious German Army.

Lourches was the centre of some of the most desperate fighting. The French did not abandon it without a struggle. When they were finally forced to retire they left behind them many of their dying comrades, knowing that the men would be cared for tenderly by the inhabitants.

During the action Emile was in the mine. When he came above ground he found that

the village was occupied by the German troops who were busily fortifying the newly captured position against a probable French counter-attack. His first thought was of his mother, and he lost no time in regaining his home.

He found that Madame Depres, with the help of some neighbours, had carried a wounded French sergeant into her cottage, and had placed him on a mattress in the corner of their small room. Emile helped his mother dress the man's wounds as well as she could, while they did all in their power to soothe his pain.

"I know I am dying," said the soldier, "but I wish I could tell you how much it means to have you here with me."

"You are dying for France, and I envy you," replied Emile.

Their defence works completed, the Germans were billeted in the homes of the villagers where they showed but little courtesy or kindness to the frightened people who were forced to receive such unwelcome guests. They also commenced a systematic house-to-house search, seizing for their own use any food they could find.

The boches rushed into the Depres cottage, and broke open all the cupboards, seeking for supplies. Emile, who was kneeling beside the wounded man, was horrified to see a trooper threatening to beat his mother with the butt end of a musket because they had found nothing, while she protested that she had no wine and no food to give them.

The poor woman was telling the truth when she said she had nothing to offer to the brutal oppressors. They refused, however, to believe her statements and one of the men, lifting his gun, struck her across the head. She fell in a heap, stretching out her arms toward her son, crying to him to help her.

Emile dashed from his place by the side of the disabled man. He flung himself on his knees, and grasped the leg of a German major who was standing watching his soldiers.

"I implore you to be merciful," he said. "For pity's sake order your men not to hurt mother."

"No one will harm either of you if you show us where you have hidden your money and food."

"Mother told you the truth. We have nothing to give you."

"You are telling lies," answered the officer. "You French people always have secret hoards of provisions somewhere."

"I assure you we have been without food for days," said Emile. "You can see how pale and thin I am; yet my mother loves me dearly. She would have fed me if she had anything to give me."

The officer refused to listen to the child, and impatiently kicked him out of his way. Meantime, the wounded French sergeant, driven to desperation by the cruel treatment of the helpless woman and child who had tried to comfort him, made an effort to rise from the mattress, but fell back, groaning. Suddenly he remembered that during the fighting he had picked up the revolver of a fallen officer, and had hidden it in his pocket. Taking the pistol in his hand, he opened fire on the Germans from the corner of the room.

No one was hit for he could not aim and all the shots went wild; but the officer gave an order: the soldiers seized the sergeant and dragged him out into the street. There was no question of a trial. The Frenchman was placed against the wall of the cottage, while the troops lined up to execute him. He was

so weak from loss of blood and was suffering so horribly from the pain of his wounds that he could not stand, but he faced death courageously.

During the time that the German major was giving the final orders for the execution to the firing squad little Emile left the women who had gathered around Madame Depres, and crept to the side of his friend, anxious to thank him for the assistance he had tried to give to his mother and himself.

"Little friend," whispered the condemned soldier, "my lips are parched with thirst. You will repay me for anything I have tried to do if, before I die, you would get me some water."

The boy ran into the house, and returned almost immediately with a cup of water; but before he had time to place it to the man's mouth it was struck out of his hand by the German officer who, white with rage, turned on the boy, saying:

"You are nothing but a young scoundrel. You were impertinent to me a short time ago and now under my very eyes you have attempted to give comfort to a French pig! As an example to the rest of the villagers of what

they may expect if they disobey my orders, you shall die with him.”

Turning to his men he commanded them to tie the boy up securely. Cords were placed around the child and he was thrown down beside his comrade, the sergeant. Not a word escaped from his lips, but great tears rolled down his cheeks when he thought of his mother lying insensible on the cottage floor and of the terrible awakening that would come to her.

No one can tell what thoughts passed through the mind of the German officer. Maybe he had a boy at home of his own, or perhaps he had a moment of pity and remorse, during which he realized that he was condemning an innocent child to death for nothing but an act of mercy. Whatever the reason, he commanded that the cords should be untied, and the boy set free. Then, laughing, he asked Emile:

“Well, I gave you a good fright, didn’t I?”

“I fear neither death nor you,” answered the boy.

“Good!” said the major. “I see you are really brave, so I will give you a chance to save your life. Then you shall go with us and

march with the regiment into Paris. Take this gun and kill the French sergeant yourself. It will save my men just that much trouble."

Emile hesitated for a few seconds. Then he turned to the major, and said:

"Give me the gun."

He seized the rifle, pretended to aim at the heart of the Frenchman, then rapidly turning on his heel, shot straight at the German officer, killing him instantly.

"Now!" he shouted. "He will not kill another Frenchman, nor strike the mother of another boy."

The German soldiers flung themselves on Emile, piercing him with their bayonets. He fell to the ground, mortally wounded, but crawled to the side of the French sergeant. Placing his little hand in that of the man, he looked first at him, then at the German troops, and with one last feeble cry of, "Long live France!" he died.

HENRIETTE MAUBERT



*"Sullenly they flung up their hands,
at the same time begging for mercy"*

HENRIETTE MAUBERT

THE defeat of the Germans at the Battle of the Marne was a bitter blow to their hopes and ambitions. They had been so close to Paris that they had almost captured the city. It was all very well for their officers to tell them they were retreating for strategic reasons, but the men knew that they were in flight before the victorious French armies.

They vented their spite on the unfortunate villages, burning and pillaging as they passed through them. Most of the houses had been deserted, their occupants having fled at the time of the German advance. Henri Maubert, however, had been unable to leave with the rest, for his wife was lying sick, and it would have killed her to put her on an ordinary farm wagon, to jolt her over the rough roads. He tried to get a place for her in an ambulance, but, failing to do this, decided, finally, to remain beside his wife. He tried to per-

suade his little daughter, Henriette, who was ten years old, to go away with some of their friends, but the child refused to leave him.

"If you are not afraid of the Germans, why should I be, father?"

"I am afraid of them, but I cannot leave mother."

"But you can't do everything that is necessary for her. I'd rather stay."

"Very well, Henriette," answered her father. "I hope that no harm will come to any of us."

Really, M. Maubert was glad the child wished to remain. He felt it his duty to give her a chance to escape, but he had heard so many stories of children, confided to the care of friends, lost en route, and never found again by their parents, that he was pleased to keep Henriette by his side.

When the Germans first captured the village they took all the food they could find in the houses, but did not injure in any way the people whom they found. They did not remain long, but marched out next day, shouting that they did not want to sleep in villages, for within a week they would have good beds in Paris.

They were in a different mood when they

returned, their plans of conquest frustrated. At the commencement, their flight was so rapid that they could only threaten the Mauberts as they passed, and hurl insults at them.

"Why should they talk to us that way?" asked Henriette. "We have done nothing to them."

"They are angry, Henriette. It should make us happy to see them in that mood as it means the French are winning."

"But surely they will not burn the house, as they shouted to us to-day, when they see mother lying sick."

"I do not count too much on their compassion," answered her father. "We can only hope they will not have time to do much mischief. Keep up your courage, dear."

Next day a troop of cavalry arrived and tethered their horses in the courtyard. They visited the house, carefully overturning everything, breaking open drawers and cupboards, even pushing the sick woman off the mattress on which she was lying, and ripping it open to see if there was any money hidden in it.

They found nothing, so, calling M. Maubert, they said:

"You have hidden your money where we

cannot find it. Now then, hand it over to us."

"I have none to give you. Last time your people passed this way, they took everything I had from me."

"You are lying!"

They bound M. Maubert's arms behind his back, and, in spite of Henriette's tears and pleadings, marched him away with them, promising that he would regret his opposition to their wishes when he found himself working in the stone quarries in Germany.

Eight of the men remained behind to search the other houses in the village.

"If we cannot get money, at any rate we can have wine. Where do you keep it, child?" said one of the men to Henriette.

"In our cellar."

"Show us how to reach it and play no tricks or we promise you the worst thrashing you have had in your life."

"No one has ever beaten me," replied Henriette. "Follow me. I will take you to the cellar."

As in most of the houses in the French villages, the cellar was reached through a trap-door in the kitchen. The Germans climbed down, one by one, and soon Henriette heard

them breaking off the necks of the bottles, shouting and laughing. They wanted to drink as much as they could as quickly as possible, and then rejoin their comrades.

Henriette began to cry when she thought of her mother sick upstairs and her father sent as a prisoner into Germany to work under the lash, perhaps to starve to death. It hurt her to know that people could laugh and drink in the midst of so much misery.

Her mother called for her, and she went upstairs to give her a cup of water. She did not dare to break the news of her father's capture; she only said that M. Maubert had thought it better to remain out of sight until the enemy had gone on. The sick woman accepted the explanation of her husband's absence and warned Henriette to keep away from the soldiers herself. When her mother fell asleep, Henriette went downstairs to find something with which to make at least a soup for her mother when she should wake, for they had eaten nothing since the night before. She hoped the soldiers had gone but was surprised to find that they were still in the cellar, although they were making less noise. Some of them had dropped off to sleep, while the others were still

drinking heavily. Henriette peeped down cautiously, and suddenly an idea flashed across her mind. She slammed down the trap-door, and pushed the heavy bolts in place. Immediately one of the men ran up the ladder, hammered on the door, and shrieked at her to open it. On the top of the trap she pushed a table, piling on it the copper pots and pans, in fact, everything heavy she could find.

“Now,” she said to herself, “they are prisoners. They can shout all they wish. I shall not open the door until the French come. They had no pity for us; they robbed and stole everything we had, and even took my father away from me.”

She went out into the village to tell the old men and women who remained behind at the time of the flight of the other inhabitants what she had done. They came, one by one, to listen to the Germans beating on the trap-door, first threatening and then imploring the child to release them.

“You are in great danger, Henriette,” said one old lady. “If another detachment should pass this way before our men arrive, you will be shot. None of us will be able to save you.”

"I know," the child replied, "but it is worth while taking the risk. I have not seen any Germans for hours, and this last group were in such a hurry that I feel our soldiers must be following close on their heels."

Henriette was not mistaken. Two hours later Farmer Mavret came in to say:

"I have seen the French troops in the distance. Thank God, we shall be free again."

"Will you go up and talk to mother so that she will not miss me?" said Henriette. "I will go out to meet the soldiers and tell them what has happened."

Henriette ran to meet the French, and said to the officer:

"Most of the Germans left the village hours ago, but eight of them remained behind drinking in our cellar. I have locked them in. Will you please come quickly?"

At first the captain doubted her story, but when the child told him further details, he laughed.

"Here is a good joke, boys," he said to his men. "This little girl is certainly a fine rat catcher."

He followed Henriette to her home with a detachment of his soldiers. The table was

removed, the trap-door opened, and the Germans climbed out to find themselves covered by the rifles of the Frenchmen. Sullenly they flung up their hands, at the same time begging for mercy.

"I do not see why I should show you any kindness," said the officer. "You have treated these people with the greatest brutality. This child tells me your men have carried her father off into captivity."

"We did not do it; we just obeyed orders," said a non-commissioned officer as spokesman for his comrades.

"It does not matter to me how, or why, you conducted yourselves as you have done," replied the captain. "You have been caught redhanded in the act of pillaging and should all be shot, but I will give you a chance to live on one condition. The father of this child must be back here before daybreak tomorrow, or else you will all die."

"How can we get him? All our comrades rode away hours ago."

"I know that they have gone on ahead, but as they have not been able to change horses, they cannot have travelled very far. One of you can take this horse, which has been resting

while you were drinking. He should be able to catch up with the detachment."

Turning to one of the Germans, he said: "You look the most intelligent and seem to be less drunk than the rest. Jump on your horse. Gallop after your men. Go straight to your commanding officer, and when you find him tell him that seven of his men, one of them a non-commissioned officer, have fallen into our hands. You will make him understand that unless the civilian Henri Maubert, whom they have carried off contrary to all rules of war, is given a horse and set free so that he reaches here before dawn to-morrow, all seven of the prisoners will be shot."

The man left immediately, while the other seven Germans were placed under guard to await the outcome.

Henriette could no longer keep the news of what had taken place from her mother.

All night long they waited, hoping to hear the beat of the horses' hoofs. At last their ears caught the welcome sound, and in a few moments M. Maubert rushed in and flung his arms around them both.

THE END



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